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K. Herman

A  
DISCOURSE  
OF  
ANCIENT and MODERN  
LEARNING.

Where, among other Things,

A New System of the Human Mind is propos'd ; and in Pursuance and Confirmation thereof, a General History of Learning, from the Earliest Ages of the World, Trac'd and Deduc'd down to the present. With Critical Remarks on the *Greek* and *Roman* Learning; particularly their Eloquence and Dramatick Poetry, as compar'd with the Modern.

The Famous Controversy about the Ancients and Moderns ; their respective Merits and Excellencies Discuss'd and Determin'd. Mr. *Boileau* and Madam *Dacier's* Errors and false Reasonings on this Head Refuted, and the Original and Source of them Discover'd.

LASTLY,

The great Use and happy Influences of the Mathematicks, not only for the Improvement of Natural Philosophy, but also in all Polite Learning, and the *Belles Lettres*; and the great and infinite Excellence and Superiority of the Modern above the Ancient Geometry, Shew'd and Demonstrated.

*Terrason*  
By ABBE TERRACON,  
A Member of the Academy of Sciences.

*Translated from the French; with Additional Improvements and Authorities from Dr. Bently, Mr. Collier, Mr. Rosel Beaumon of Berlin, &c. wanting in the Original.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. ROBERTS, near the *Oxford-Arms* in *Warwick-Lane.* MDCCXVI.

2436



LEARNING  
TO  
DISCOVER  
THE  
ART AND MYSTERY  
OF

The famous Convent, above the Ancient and Modern  
 last respective Merits and Excesses Discussed and  
 Described. Mr. Butler and Mr. Davenport's Errors and  
 Reasonings on the Head Refuted, and the Original and  
 Source of their Discover'd.

The great life and happy influence of the Liberator, not only for the improvement of human philosophy, but also in all other learning, and the better state, and the great and infinite knowledge and glory of the Modern world, the Ancient, Show and Discover.

A Member of the Academy of Sciences  
By ABBE TERRACONI

Translated from the French; with Additional and revised  
and Authentic from Dr. Henry Hall, Col. A. R. H.  
del Beamon, &c. &c. &c. in the Original.

Printed for J. BARNETT, near the Old Bailey, by  
WILLIAM LANE, M.DCCXVI.

L O N D O N :



TO HIS GRACE

J O H N

Duke of *Marlborough*,

Prince of *Mindelheim*, Marquis of  
*Blandford*, Earl of *Marlborough*,  
Baron *Churchill* of *Sandridge* and  
*Aumouth*; Captain-General of all  
His Majesty's Forces, One of the  
Lords of His Majesty's Privy-  
Council, Knight of the most  
Noble Order of the Garter.

May it please Your GRACE,



AFTER having lately re-  
ceiv'd a particular Mark of  
your Favour, I cannot omit  
taking the first Opportunity  
to return you my just Ac-  
knowledgments. The expressing my Gra-  
titude

titute in this manner, is the only Means, yet in my Power, to appear not wholly unworthy of your Grace's Regard; and I did not know how to render my Acknowledgments, either more publick, or more lasting, than by thus prefixing them to a Discourse, that will probably continue as long as the *French* and *English* Language are understood, or as Men have a Relish for Polite Learning and Good Sense.

BUT I must also own, that my chief Motive and Inducement to this Address was not founded merely in personal Obligations: For tho' I have all the Gratitude imaginable for those your Grace has laid upon me, yet nothing of this Nature shou'd have produc'd an Application of this Kind, had I not been determin'd to it by more publick Considerations, to interest your Grace in the Cause here maintain'd and defended.

THE Design of the following Discourse being to prove the present Age not inferior to any of the former, I was resolv'd, when I determin'd to publish it in our own Language, to give the Adversaries of this Assertion as little Advantage against me in my Dedication, as I imagine the Author has done in his Confirmation of it; your  
Grace's



Grace's Character will be it self an illustrious Proof of the Cause he maintains.

THE most Hazardous and Laborious Undertakings have been attended with Glory and Success, from a View of those just Rewards which the Ancient Sages propos'd to the Actions of Men. They assign'd proper Encouragements to Merit of every Kind; but to Arms and Letters they have ascrib'd a Fame far exalted above what they allow'd to any other Performances. Amongst all the Endowments of Nature, or Improvements of Art, they have given the Preference to Poetry and Heroick Virtue: And every Age and Country has been distinguish'd for its Superior Genius and Excellēce, in proportion as it has exerted it self in those two Particulars.

As to Poetry, our Author thought he had no Occasion to go out of his own Country, to find a Genius equal, if not superior, as he believ'd, to any Antiquity could boast of.

BUT we must excuse him, if he is at a loss to find out in his own Nation an Instance of that other, yet Diviner Quality, Heroick Virtue; and our Country is so profess'd an Enemy to their Constitution, as well with Respect to its Civil as Ecclesiastical Tyranny, that it was not to be

expected he would make us a Compliment of this Kind ; notwithstanding, without this, much the greater and better Part of his Argument remains unprov'd, in his Dispute concerning the Advantage of the Moderns, and their Superiority over the Ancients. Nay, it might be shewn, were this a proper place, that all the other great and boasted Advantages of Wit, Learning, and Eloquence, when apart from this, contribute to the Prejudice, rather than the Advantage of Mankind. Since the only Use all Despotick Governments make of Men of Learning and Parts, is by their means to impose on Men's Understandings, and to carry that by false Reasonings, which cannot be gain'd by Arms.

To return ; it is not to be wondred, that our Author's Country, which furnish'd him, as he thought, with the Example of the greatest Poets, should refuse him a Consummate Heroe. For the High Spirit of Heroick Virtue can never subsist, where that of Liberty is wanting ; where the Equality and Justice of Guardian Laws are abolish'd and extinct ; nor is it any way suited to the Capacity of a Nation, who in a long Series of Degrees, from the meanest Peasant to the highest Slave of Royal Blood, are taught to Idolize the  
next

next in Power above them ; and think nothing so adorable , as that Unlimited Greatness and Tyrannick Power, which is rais'd at their own Expence, and exercis'd to their own Ruin.

AND yet there's nothing in which the Virtue of former Ages shone more bright, than in the Love, the Esteem and Veneration they show'd for publick Liberty, the Love of their Country, and Heroick Virtue. This was always reckon'd a Treasure sacred, not only among the more Polite, but even among the most Barbarous Nations; has had its Altars among the *Scythian*, as well as *Greek* and *Roman* Deities; and was pray'd to as a Goddess, whose Influence was highly beneficial. Nothing was accounted more Venerable amongst Men : They brought up their Children with a Devotion to it, as including all Offices of Honour and Virtue : They made it their chief Good, advancing it far above the Considerations, either of Profit or Pleasure; which, comparatively, they held in Contempt. Men Successful and Famous in their Generation, in the Defence and Vindication of Publick Liberty, and a just and equal Balance of Power, ever had the Character of Heroes bestow'd upon them by the Wise Ancients, and their Memory



consecrated to Immortality. The Respect they paid to this Virtue prevail'd so far over their natural Aversions, that they were fond of it in Foreigners and Strangers, as well as in Friends and Countrymen; it was the Object of their Admiration, tho' possess'd by their Enemies: So that all who now act contrary to those Generous Sentiments, contend against the very Light of Nature, and want even Pagan Gratitude and Honour.

IN order therefore to do Justice to the Moderns, we must turn our Eyes upon some Free People, to discover in their Annals a Hero, who, for this God-like Disposition of Mind, may be compar'd to the most Fam'd among the Ancients: And if the true Notion of this Exalted Virtue, in its shortest and fullest Description, be the well-deserving of Mankind: If where this is Chief in Design and Great in Success, a Title lies open to so Sublime a Character, we need not, in tracing out the Paths of Heroick Virtue, go any further than your Grace's Story and Example. *Englishmen* may affirm, with a particular Pleasure, That they have no Occasion to look back to past Ages, or to go out of their own Nation for Instances of Glory. That Men, Eminent for Genius and Heroick  
-1102  
2  
Virtue,

Virtue, have adorn'd *Britain* as well as *Greece* and *Rome*; and that Martial Fame is not extinct with the Destruction of those Commonwealths: However Elaborate their Philosophers, their Orators, and their Poets have been in these Arguments, we can name those who have not only equal'd, but out-done the most Elaborate Ideas they have given us of them. As for my own part, if I can hope for your Grace's Pardon for this Address, I am sure all the rest of the World will applaud my Conduct in it. For to whom could an Advocate, for the Honour of the present Age, better direct his Defence of it, than to him to whom it stands indebted for whatever Distinctions it possesses, that are most Shining and Glorious in its Character?

WHEN the World was fully sensible, that a most Christian Tyranny would put on Chains as heavy as any Heathen one; and indeed only so much the worse, for the Difference there was between them; for to make the most perfect System of Charity and Tenderneſs, a Pretence for Cruelty and Persecution; to make an outward Profession of the Christian Religion, and yet to break in upon those Rights of Society it intends to guard; to turn Articles, and Oaths, and Renunciations, and  
all

all the strongest Ties of mutual Faith, into Instruments of Perfidiousness and Deceit, Avarice and Ambition, has something in it so horrid, that one knows not how to mention it without Terror. When I say, therefore, this worse than Pagan Tyranny, that had all along shew'd as little Truth to its Allies, as Tenderness to its own Subjects, was become formidable to *Europe*; and its principal Patron, whose constant Practice it had been to enlarge his Power beyond Right, and to use it without Mercy; had, for near an Age, been always Triumphant in his Encroachments upon his Neighbours, and succeeded to that Degree in every thing he undertook, as from a long Series of good Fortune, to arrogate to himself the Titles of *Intrepid* and *Invincible*; and at last, by supplanting the *Austrian* Family in *Spain*, and annexing the Dominions of that Crown to his own, had arriv'd to such a Pitch of Power, as again, (e're Mankind had well recover'd the Misery of those barbarous Ages, consequent upon the *Roman* Yoke,) threaten'd to bring this Side of the World under one cruel Superstition, and subject the best Part of Mankind to the Tyranny of one single Person: Then it was, we saw rais'd up in so nice a Juncture, by a peculiar Pro-



Providence, a General form'd by Nature, finish'd by Experience, for Bold and Noble Enterprizes; whose Sedateness and Judgment in Council, Courage and Presence of Mind in Action, whose deserv'd Authority with all our Allies, and whose peculiar Felicity in Gaining and Improving Advantages, were the Blessing of his own, the Wonder of every Country.

THE Cause your Grace engag'd in, *viz.* the Defence of Publick Liberty, and the Rights of injur'd Nations, was the Greatest and Noblest, Man was capable of undertaking; the Principle you acted upon, Christian and Commendable: No inordinate Thirst of false Honour to be acquir'd by Slaughter and Devastation; no Greediness to enlarge Territories, or to enrich the Treasures of your Sovereign with Spoils, at the Expence of Innocent and Peaceable Neighbours; but an honest Desire to bring back into its own Chancel, what Encroachment and Usurpation had drawn away; to adjust such a Balance of Power, as might prevent our Selves and Allies from becoming a Prey to an Insatiable Devourer; to Establish Security of Commerce, and a mutual good Understanding between adjacent Countries; in a word, to assure the Quiet and Safety of the whole *Western World.*

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IF we shou'd now go on, and allow our selves the Pleasure to observe, how Designs so Just, so Wise, and Honourable, were manag'd and prosper'd in the Execution, under your Grace's Conduct; a Spacious and Delightful Scene wou'd open to our View: A Scene too Glorious indeed to be forgotten; and yet, considering what follow'd, too affecting to be remembred.

SUCH an uninterrupted Series of Conquests, as neither Memory nor History can furnish us with parallel Instances of; neither we, nor yet those that liv'd in any of the former Ages of the World, have any such Actions as these to shew, for the Glory and Honour of their Country. Most Occasions of Joy come so moderate, that Nature can bear them; Expectation has in some measure seiz'd upon them, before they come; and when actually arriv'd, Sense can hold out to enjoy the rest: But really the Blessings your Grace's Successes brought along with them, not only for us, but all *Europe*, astonish'd whilst they pleas'd, and Time was wanting to wear off our Wonder, e're we cou'd come to taste the Satisfaction of them.

MY LORD,

IT is not easy to resist the Temptation of indulging my self upon this Subject; especially when I am so effectually secur'd, as well from the Imputation; as the Guilt of Flattery. For none can be so hardy, to dispute your Grace's Merit, without denying the very Blessings they enjoy, as the Result of it. But in regard to the Uneasiness I should give your Grace, and indeed to the Injustice I shou'd do this great Subject for want of suitable Talents, I shall here leave it, as a peculiar Felicity reserv'd for that Candid and Immortal Pen, who after so many other seasonable and useful Labours for the good of his Country, has also engag'd to oblige the Publick, as the last and most valuable Performance of his Life, with what will ever be allow'd to be the Brightest, most Glorious, and Ornamental Part of the *English* History.

LET others seek for Mercenary Historians, dextrous in Eloquent Flattery, to write their Annals: Yours, my Lord, asks no Art nor Ornament; a Faithful, nay a Modest Relation, would scarce find Credit hereafter; were it not that the Benefits of your Victories, some Part of them at least, will



will be transmitted with your Story to future Ages; and that Posterity shall be convinc'd, by a feeling of that Happiness, which they might otherwise lie under some Temptation of making a Difficulty to believe.

THE Peace and Tranquillity of your own Country, secur'd by your Courage and Conduct; the Fame and Power of our Arms in other Countries, the Distinctions and Glory of the *British* Valour, (a Natural Consequence of *British* Liberty) the effectual Support of our Allies, the Generous Vindication of Injur'd Princes, the seasonable Restraint of Potent Oppression, the Vanquishing Foreigners into their own Freedom, and Exchanging their Slavery for Legal Rights and Properties: These were the Glorious Consequences of your Grace's Atchievements, the shining and distinguishing Beauties of your Victories and Conquests, in which you have been Resembled but by few, in any of them scarce ever Excell'd, in all of them never Equall'd by any the most Renown'd Chiefs, either in the *Assyrian*, *Grecian*, or *Roman* Story; or to speak in the Royal Style, and confirm the whole by the highest Authority, You have thus obtain'd a Fame, which has made your Name out-shine all the Heroes  
of

of Antiquity, and will render it the Wonder  
of the latest Posterity.

THIS is what has rais'd your Grace  
to the Sublime Character, of being the  
Chief Honour and Ornament, as well as  
Blessing, of the Age in which you live;  
and your Example alone is more than suf-  
ficient, for ever to obviate the groundless  
Conceits, and vain and ignorant Fancies  
and Mistakes of those Men, who appre-  
hend any Decay of Genius now, or De-  
generacy in Human Nature, above what  
obtain'd in some former Ages of the World,  
and so the most proper Patron of the fol-  
lowing Discourse: The Honour and Or-  
nament is indeed ours, but the Blessing and  
Happiness extended it self to every Nation  
and Country, that were not willing to be-  
come Slaves to a *French* Power.

AND, as such Noble Actions were of a  
more auspicious Influence, so will they also  
deliver down a more Glorious Name to  
Posterity: A Name that shall be written in  
Characters more Lasting, and be read with  
greater Delight and Admiration, than Pom-  
pous Titles and Triumphal Arches, pollu-  
ted with the Adulation and Blasphemy of  
Nauseous Flatterers, the Tears of Enslav'd  
Subjects, the Blood of Men wantonly  
spilt in the Pursuit of false Glory, and the

Suf-

Sufferings of Christians barbarously persecuted for bearing Testimony to Truth, and a good Conscience; as far Superior, as the Establishing and Securing, the Defending and Protecting true Religion and Virtue, the Civil Rights and Properties, or all that is Dear and Valuable to Men and Christians, must leave a greater and diviner Character, than their Extinction and Overthrow. And therefore, as long as there any Liberties left in *Europe*, (which we now hope are about to be made as lasting and permanent as Time it self) your Grace's Memory and Actions must live in Immortal Honour and Esteem among all the Sons of Men.

*I am,*

*My LORD,*

*May it please Your GRACE,*

*Your GRACE'S*

*Most Obedient,*

*Humble Servant,*

**Francis Brerewood.**





# PREFACE.



THE present Age seems well prepar'd and qualify'd to carry Criticism to its highest Pitch and Perfection: We have already seen many happy Attempts this way; several admirable Essays and Performances of this Kind, both upon Sacred and Profane Subjects, have appear'd of late, preferable to all former Ages have left us. Many Ingenious Hands have concurr'd to rescue it from Pedantry, Dulness, and Ill Nature: It is no longer now a days, a sower, verbal Study, but claims a Place among the Politest Parts of Learning. But what a great Critick may do, if he pleases, and in how different an Aspect Criticism appears, when form'd by a Man of Parts and Fire, Taste and Genius, never, I believe, shone so conspicuous, as in Abbe

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Terracon's late Critical Dissertation upon Homer's Iliad; whom I esteem not only the Best Critick, but the Noblest Genius for the Belles Lettres the last Age has produc'd, or that have publish'd any thing in the French, or any other Modern Language: A Person thoroughly qualified and capable, not only of Criticizing on the greatest of the Ancients, but also of forming the brightest Images and greatest Ideas, and giving himself the Noblest Examples in all the several Sorts of Composition and Writing he shall apply himself to, if the Length of his Life and Studies do but equal the Excellence of his Wit and other Virtues. For if those are continu'd judging in proportion to what we have already seen, what Heights mayn't such a one reach and attain, who has already so early, and so highly, but so justly rais'd the Esteem and Admiration of the Learned World, at so much Knowledge, and good Taste, in so much Youth, by his present Performance; which will be allow'd, by all proper Judges, to be the finest and noblest Piece of Criticism that was ever yet wrote upon any Classick? A Work in such Perfection of Beauty, that it cannot enough be commended, whether we consider the Curiousness of his Observations, the Justness of his Remarks and Reflections, the Truth  
and

and Importance of his Rules, the Aptness and Beauty of his Examples, the Force and Elegance of his Style, or the Penetration of his Wit and Judgment: So that those Dissertations, which in most other Hands, however Learned, wou'd have look'd dull and dry, in his assume and put on quite another Form and Appearance; shine in all the Graces, that Life, and Ease, and Vigor, and true Taste and Knowledge, as well of the Fort, as Foible of the most Celebrated and considerable either of the Ancient or Modern Authors, can beautify and adorn them with. We see here how entertaining the severest Criticisms are in such a hand, and what Life and Spirit he can give, even to the driest Part of his Subject, whilst he prescribes the Rules, and fixes the Laws of the Poetick Art, weighs and examines the Importance of those deliver'd us by the Ancients, advances and discovers others perhaps of greater Moment and Importance, unknown to all either Ancients or Moderns, till he wrote.

But we need not enlarge any farther upon his Character, since all the Journalists of Europe (those useful and faithful Heralds of Authors Character and Fame) have already prevented us herein, and unanimously concurr'd to give him his just Encomium,



and due Praises; ( a Felicity and Happiness that has rarely, if ever, befallen any before him, ) and seem only to vie with one another, who shall commend and applaud his Performance most \*: We shall therefore here content our selves with mentioning only one of them, but a remarkable one; 'tis the Learned and Ingenious Mr. M. Author of the Curious Journal, entitled, the *Histoire Critique de la Republique de Lettres*; who being universally allowed so exact and just a Critick himself, so great a Master of the Greek and Roman Learning, and profess'd Admirer of the Ancients, his Testimony therefore, in Favour of an Author who has so warmly espoused the Cause of the Moderns against them, and declar'd in their Favour, will certainly be thought Just and Impartial; and what nothing but the Force of Truth, and the Strength of Mr. Terracon's Reasoning, or the intrinsic Worth and Merit of his Performance, cou'd ever have extorted from him. The Passage I mean, is what occurs P. 379. of the 10th Tome of his *Histoire Critique*, lately publish'd, where he delivers

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\* See the *Paris Journal* of the Amsterdam Edition, in February, p. 156. and that of March, p. 340. as also the *Journal Litteraire*, printed at the Hague, Tom. 7. Part 2. p. 261.

himself to this Purpose: " Mr. Terra-  
 " con's *Critical Dissertation upon Homer*,  
 " in *Two Volumes 12<sup>o</sup>*. makes here a  
 " great Noise: In less than Eight Days,  
 " there has been above Five Hundred  
 " Copies sold. Homer is there attack'd  
 " with a great deal of Learning and  
 " Spirit. Homer is not the only Au-  
 " thor Abbe Terracon criticizes; Aristotle  
 " is as little favour'd as Homer. Mr. Ter-  
 " racon's Criticisms fall also upon the Greek  
 " Theatre, and their Dramatick Writers.  
 " Whoever will pass a fair and impartial  
 " Judgment, and without Prejudice, upon  
 " this Performance, must allow that this  
 " Author has enter'd farther, and gone  
 " deeper into the Merits of this Controver-  
 " sy, than any of his Predecessors; and  
 " that he has thoroughly discuss'd the Points  
 " in Debate between him and his Adversa-  
 " ries; and that he has shew'd, through  
 " the whole Dissertation, a great Reach,  
 " and much Penetration; and that his  
 " Book will be of vast Use and Service, as  
 " well to Reform and Improve, as Exalt  
 " and Refine the Taste of the Age. Again,  
 in Page 437. after having inserted the  
 Title at length, he goes on to acquaint  
 " his Reader, that the only Reason why he  
 " inserted it, not then having room left to

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" make

“ make an Abstract of the Book, was only  
“ to inform the Publick of the Value he set  
“ upon the Performance, and to publish his  
“ Judgment and Opinion thereof to the  
“ World, viz. That he look’d upon it as  
“ much the greatest and most considerable  
“ Performance in Critical Learning, that  
“ had ever appear’d in the Commonwealth  
“ of Letters; and that he heartily congrat-  
“ ulated Mr. Terracon thereupon, being  
“ perfectly charm’d to see in him so superior  
“ a Genius, so void of Prejudice, so great  
“ a Master of Reasoning, so deep a Pene-  
“ tration, so solid a Judgment, so fine and  
“ exalted a Taste; in a word, so Bright  
“ and Polite a Writer. And without too  
“ hastily venturing, before sufficient Exami-  
“ nation, to approve every thing contain’d  
“ in his Book, he yet durst be bold to propose  
“ his Method and Manner of Writing,  
“ as alone proper and worthy to be  
“ follow’d, and imitated hereafter, by such as  
“ were sincere Lovers of Truth; and of  
“ what only had solid Worth and Merit  
“ in all the several Productions of Human  
“ Fancy and Wit. What prodigious Dif-  
“ ference is there, continues he, between  
“ his Manner of Reasoning, and the perpe-  
“ petual Declamations of Mr. and Madam  
“ D.;



“ D.; whose Writings, especially their la-  
 “ test Compositions, may very well prove  
 “ the Corruption of some particular Tasts,  
 “ while those of Mr. La Motte, and Abbe  
 “ Terracon, shew and demonstrate the Just-  
 “ nefs and Delicacy of that of the Age in  
 “ general” ? Thus far Mr. M. We sha’n’t  
 trouble the Reader with any other Testimo-  
 nies or Passages, either of the Foreign  
 Journalists, or other Learned Men Abroad,  
 or at Home, in Favour of our Author; but  
 content our selves with the References al-  
 ready made to them, p. 6. to whoever desires  
 to see them, or will please to consult them.

And when the whole Work is publish’d,  
 what some of our best Writers have so long  
 and often wish’d for and desir’d, viz. That  
 some of the finest Wits would undertake the  
 most Fam’d and Celebrated Authors in the  
 World, and give us a Comment upon them,  
 as well to display their Faults and Failings,  
 as their Beauties and Excellencies, we may  
 see with, inexpressible Pleasure, performed  
 by Abbe Terracon, upon one of the most  
 Fam’d and Celebrated of all the Ancient  
 Poets. And if he, or Men of equal Learn-  
 ing and Genius with him, would proceed,  
 and go on with this Task, and apply, in like  
 manner, the Light of true Philosophy, and  
 Rational Criticism, as he has done, to the

other great Writers of Antiquity, and do them the same Justice, we might then hope to read them in a truer Light, and discover many Faults and Blemishes, as well as several Graces and Beauties, that lie now cover'd and bury'd under the Modern Way of Illustration; and see further and deeper into the whole Extent and Value of the Ancient Learning, and neither be so apt to overrate, nor yet level it below its just Worth and Merit, as is now almost constantly done.

Such a Work as this, we have now more Ground to hope for than ever; since we have some Reason shortly to expect, not only the Noblest and Correctest Edition of the Sacred Records of our Holy Religion that was ever yet publish'd, but also of the whole Sett of the Ancient Greek and Latin Classics, that shall far outshine and excell, either the Variorum, the Louvre, or those for the Use of the Dauphin, from one thoroughly qualify'd, and fully equal to the Task: A Person of so great and exalted a Genius, as seems born to illuminate and give new Light into the darkest Mysteries of Antiquity; and such as have hitherto lain conceal'd from

the Industry, Critical Knowledge, and Sagacity of all former Writers in this way; and even to let us into the Sanctum Sanctorum it self, or into the Knowledge of all the chief Difficulties, the Original Proprieties and principal Beauties of the Holy Scriptures. For certainly never any Person came better prepar'd, or more capable to unveil the Obscurities, whether of the Ancient, Sacred, or Prophane Authors; so many great Endowments meeting in him; a singular Penetration, Vast Reading, Indefatigable Study, and a Profound Skill in the Original Languages, with an Universal Eru- dition; and, which is beyond and above all, an Honest Candor and Sublimity of Mind, above Party and Faction: Talents not very common among those, as have hitherto engaged in the Province of Commenting upon the Ancient Authors; more especially such as have pretended the Honour to unlock the Venerable Archives of our Holy Religion; a Book (to let our Empty Wits know so much by the by) that contains not only better Morals (for that wou'd recommend it but little to them) but also greater and more Noble and Valuable Antiquities (which some of 'em wou'd appear so fond of) and more hidden Treasures, than all the Vo-  
lumes



*lumes of the Alexandrian, Vatican, or Bodleian Libraries contain besides.*

*A Dissertation therefore, which in the Judgment and Opinion of the most Learned, ought to serve for a Pattern and Model to all others of this Sort, that shall ever hereafter be wrote upon any of the Ancients; containing such a Variety of Curious Learning, and Liberty of Thought, out of the common Road of Criticks and Commentators; we thought might be no unacceptable Present to the Publick at such a Juncture, which encourag'd us to attempt a Translation of so Valuable a Book, and which so few here have yet seen; but that we might the better try the Taste of the Town, what Encouragement such a Work may expect, we judg'd it proper to begin with the Preliminary Discourse, as a small Specimen of our Author's Genius, and Manner of Writing; and this we were the sooner determin'd to do, since this Discourse is rather a just and compleat Dissertation on some Subjects of the greatest Importance in the whole Compass of Ancient and Modern Learning, than a particular Preface to a Criticism on the Iliad.*

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The Reader then is only to suppose this, as a Preliminary Discourse to a more Elaborate Treatise; and that if the Taste here given, of the Author's Manner and Genius, be found pleasing and acceptable, he shall be further oblig'd with the Publication of the whole Work, (and of which a further Specimen and Proposals are herewith publish'd) in a very short time.




POST-



## POSTSCRIPT.

Some of the following Pages being Blank, I thought I could not better fill them up, than with the following remarkable Passage of an Illustrious Critick of our own, it being so full and home to the main Scope and Design of this Author in his Critical Dissertation upon the *Iliad*.

 *B* *Esides the Authority of those Two Great Criticks, Scaliger and Hein-  
sius, and the other more Modern but  
Acute and Polite Writer, Mr.  
La Motte, all whose Testimonies  
Mr Terracon brings to confirm his System,  
in the following Discourse, p. 65. as opposing the  
general Stream and Current of the other Criticks  
and Writers of their Age, with reference to Ho-  
mer and his Poems; there's another late Writer,  
who has also deliver'd his Judgment and Opinion  
of him, in Agreement with the former; and in-  
deed carry'd his Censure further and higher,  
than any of them have done. Whose Testimony  
therefore probably he had not seen, else would  
not*



not have omitted it, as being universally allow'd by all unprejudiced Persons, who are proper Judges, not inferior to any these later Ages have produc'd; or rather, as to his Critical Judgment and Sagacity, superior to all of them; I mean the Great and very Learned Dr. Bently: Vir in sæculi sui gloriam & decus, simul & invidiam natus, who, tho' but occasionally, treating this Argument, yet delivers his Opinion so clearly and fully on this Head, as to Homer and his Manner of Writing, and thereby, (which makes it still more remarkable,) so effectually strikes at the very Root of all these so curious and artificial, but chimerical and mere imaginary Systems of Mr. and Madam D. and others of Homer's fond Admirers; which never had the least Ground, either in the Design of the Poet, or the Nature of his Work, or any other Foundation, besides the Fancy and Imagination of those Authors; that I thought it might not be unacceptable, but add further Weight and Strength to Abbe Terracon's System with all impartial Persons, to see what so just and exact a Critick says on this Occasion. 'Tis in his Remarks on the late Discourse of Free-Thinking, p. 18, and 19. Art. 7. where addressing himself to the Author, who had profess'd himself to admire Homer's Iliad, as containing an Epitomy of all Arts and Sciences.

" To prove this Universal Knowledge of Homer's, a priori, he says, p. 18. He design'd his Poem for Eternity, to please and instruct Mankind. Admirable, says the Doctor; Eternity and Mankind: Nothing less than all  
 " Ages,

“ Ages, and all Nations, were in the Poet’s Fore-  
 “ sight; tho’ our Author vouches, that he thinks  
 “ every Day de quolibet ente. Give me leave  
 “ to except Homer: for he never seems to have  
 “ thought of him, or his History. Take my  
 “ Word for it, poor Homer in those Circumstances,  
 “ and early Times, had never such aspiring  
 “ Thoughts. He wrote a Sequel of Songs and  
 “ Rapsodies, to be sung by himself for small  
 “ Earnings, and good Chear at Festivals, and other  
 “ Days of Merriment; the Ilias he made for the  
 “ Men, and the Odyssæis for the other Sex.  
 “ These loose Songs were not collected together in  
 “ the Form of an Epick Poem, till Pisistratus’s  
 “ Time about 500 Years after. Nor is there one  
 “ Word in Homer, that presages or promises Im-  
 “ mortality to his Work; as we find there is in  
 “ the later Poets, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Lu-  
 “ can, and Statius. He no more thought at  
 “ that Time, that his Poems wou’d be Immor-  
 “ tal, than our Free-Thinkers now believe their  
 “ Souls will; and the Proof of each will be  
 “ only a parte post; in the Event, but not in  
 “ the Expectation.

Again, P. 17. “ Well, where are the Footsteps  
 “ of this vast Knowledge in Homer? Why, for  
 “ Instance, says he, he cou’d never describe, in  
 “ the manner he has done, a Chariot, or Chariot-  
 “ Wheel, without the particular Knowledge of  
 “ a Coach-Maker: Such Knowledge being ab-  
 “ solutely necessary to that Description. Here’s  
 “ Justness of Thought! What, nothing less than  
 “ a Coach-Maker’s Knowledge? Wou’d not a  
 “ Coach-Man’s have serv’d the turn? At this rate  
 “ our

" our Friend Homer (as poor and blind as some  
 " have thought him) was the ablest Jack-of-all-  
 " Trades that ever was in Nature. Hippias the  
 " Elean, who Preach'd and Blazon'd his Arts at  
 " the Olympick Games, that all his Habit,  
 " from Head to Foot, and every Utensil for his  
 " House was made with his own Hands, was an  
 " Ideot Evangelist to him. For by the same  
 " Rule, when Homer describes a Ship under Sail,  
 " he had the particular Knowledge both of a Ship-  
 " Carpenter, and a Pilot: When he describes  
 " the well-booted Greeks, and several Sorts of  
 " Shields, and Sandals, he had the particular  
 " Knowledge of Tythius *οὐτοτόμῳ ὅχ' αἰείας*, the  
 " very Prince of all Shoemakers. Thus far  
 the Learned Dr. Bently.

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THE Learned Mr. Bernard, in his *Nouvelles de la Republique des Lettres*, for the Months of May and June last, p. 393. after having given an Account of *Abbe Terracon's* Book, concludes with these Words; *This Work appears to me, upon the whole, an Excellent Performance, and that we have not a better Book wrote in our Language, either to refine the Taste, or improve the Judgment of Young Gentlemen, that wou'd apply themselves to the Study of Polise Learning.* I am extremely surpriz'd, continues he, that our Booksellers in Holland, who have of late Reprinted but some indifferent Pieces relating to the Controversy now depending about Homer, have not yet Reprinted this; and so much the more, as it were easy to make both a Correcter and a much more Beautiful Edition than the Paris one. We hope what he complains the Dutch had omitted, the English Booksellers have here perform'd, and presented the Reader with a Translation, that not only has done Justice to the Original, and represented its Sense with Truth and Propriety; but is besides superior to the Paris one, not only upon the Account of the Paper and Character, the Correctness and Beauty of the Impression, but also for several other large and considerable Improvements and Additions, wanting in the Original. For, not to mention the full



full and copious Indexes, as well Alphabetical as others, wanting in the *French*, which yet are so necessary in a Book abounding with so many Curious and Valuable Digressions; nor the remarkable Passage from Dr. Bentley; there's also added a long and valuable one relating to the *Greek Dramatick Poetry*, from Mr. Collier; upon which, tho' omitted by our Author, and only simply referr'd to, yet a great Part of the Force and Strength of one of the main Branches of his Argument and Reasoning wholly depended. There's likewise here inserted, a Letter containing a Judgment and Character of this Work by the Ingenious Mr. Rosel Bauman of Berlin, so well known by his many Learned Critical Dissertations, and especially by his Curious Remarks on Dr. Bentley's *Horace*, printed in the *Histoire Critique De la Republique des Lettres*. Lastly, we intend, as a necessary Supplement, and proper Conclusion for the whole, to collect together the several Rules that lie dispers'd up and down the Original, and present them in one short View, or reduce them into one Regular and Beautiful System; since 'tis certain, that those, however our Author's great Modesty made him propose them only Problematically, and by way of Conjecture and Essay, compose much the best and most Perfect System of Poetry, in all its several Parts and Branches, that has ever yet been publish'd to the World.

fall and common interest, as well as the  
of others, standing in the way, which  
and necessary in a book intended  
to many Editors and valuable  
not the remarkable Essay of Dr. B.  
there is added a long and valuable  
relating to the Great Dismal Swamp,  
Mr. C. upon which, the present  
Author, and only simply relating to  
great part of the Force and strength  
of the main branches of the Argument, and  
Resolving wholly depended. This, the  
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the ingenious Mr. M. of the  
to well known by his name, learned  
Distinctions, and especially by his  
Remarks on Dr. B. is here printed in  
the History of the Law, in Latin,  
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since in part, that might, however, our  
Author's great Ability, made him proper  
them only Philosophically, and by way of  
Consequence and Effect, compared with the  
and most Perfect System of Poetry, in all its  
several Parts and Branches, that has ever yet  
been published to the World.



A  
**Preliminary Discourse**

To a CRITICAL

**EXAMINATION**

OF

*Homer's Iliad, &c.*



BEFORE I present the Reader with my Critical Dissertation upon the *Iliad* of *Homer*, I think it first proper to acquaint him with what was my principal Mo-

tive and Design in undertaking it. My chief Scope and Aim herein, was to introduce the same Light of Reason and

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Sound



Sound Philosophy, by Help and Assistance of which, there has of late been made such Great and Noble Discoveries in the Study and Knowledge of Nature, into all the several Arts of Speech also; such as Eloquence and Poetry, Criticism and Philology; in a word, into whatever now passes under the Name of Polite Learning, and the *Belles Lettres*: And by a new but happy Alliance and Union of Philosophy with Philology, to contribute what I can to the Improvement and Perfection of Both.

By Philosophy, I here mean a *Superiority of Judgment and Reason, that makes us refer every thing to its Just and Natural Principles, independently upon the Opinions that Men either in this, or former Ages of the World, have had or entertain'd concerning them.* In this Sense, Philosophy no longer implies any one particular Science, or distinct and separate Branch of Human Knowledge; such as Ethicks, Physicks, or Metaphysicks, whose very Names and Titles sufficiently characterize and distinguish them. It may seem to have somewhat more of Affinity, and a stricter Connection with Logick, or the Art of Reasoning justly; yet 'tis also superior even

to

to it: For as much as Logick, properly speaking, consists only in drawing just Consequences from Principles whatever they are; whereas Philosophy rises much higher, and removing all Prejudices, ascends to the first Source and Original of all our Ideas and Notions of Things, and examines the Truth of Principles themselves, upon which any Controversy or Question depends. Mr. Boileau, for Instance, in his Reflexions upon Longinus, says, *The ancient and constant Esteem and Admiration that has been given to a Work or Book of Wit, is a sure and certain Proof that it justly deserves such Admiration and Esteem.* Refl. 7.  
Homer's Poems have been anciently and universally esteem'd and admir'd; we ought therefore still to continue our Esteem and Admiration of them: This is Logick. But the just and natural Principle by which we are to judge of a Poem, or any other Piece of Wit, is not the ancient and constant Admiration that has been given it; but is its real Conformity and Agreement with sound Sense and right Reason; and it's free and easy, but withal Bold, Noble, and happy Imitation of Nature: This is Philosophy.

I CONFINE and limit, as far as 'tis necessary, this Principle of Philosophy purely to Human Sciences, and Rational Knowledge: Yet I dare affirm, if 'tis rightly stated and well understood, it may be extended even to Religion it self. The proper and original Reason of Believing, is the Authority of our Saviour, and the Decisions of his Apostles. Some of the Articles of Faith deliver'd by them, may be above the Comprehension, or even the Examination of Human Reason; but the Authority which determines me to believe them, is of so bright and shining a Nature, and is accompany'd with so superior and irresistible an Evidence to whoever sincerely and impartially examines it, as will soon raise and place him above all Danger of much doubting, or e'en so much as suspecting the Truth and Certainty of them. Philosophy it self then necessarily obliges me to submit my Reason to the brighter Evidence of Divine Revelation and Religion, to use the Expression of an Inspir'd Apostle \*, *Hereupon commences a reasonable Service.* 'Tis thus that the Light of Reason, that Superiority of Judgment and Understanding above-mention'd, which in these last Ages has overturn'd the ancient Systems, and thrown even an enlighten'd

\*Rom. xii.  
1.



lighten'd Doubt over the Modern, serves only to confirm and establish the most important of all Truths, whether Ancient or Modern ; and which indeed every Part of Universal Nature concurs every where to publish and proclaim: And the whole taken together, seems absolutely to demonstrate and establish.

A PHILOSOPHER then never confounds one Science with another : He leaves every one in its proper Rank and Order ; and only takes from each those Principles and Rules by which he judges of every thing. It may happen that a Naturalist by Profession, accusom'd only to a rigorous Search after Truth, and an Exactness in making Experiments, may despise the Fables, the Beauties and Charms of Poetry ; or at least be inclin'd to introduce such a Dryness of Method, and Exactness of Reasoning into it, as would only corrupt and spoil it : But a Philosopher knowing that Poetry is particularly design'd to please the Imagination, admits, in this sort of writing, Fictions and Figures, Prosopopeia's, and all other needful and necessary Ornaments, which he would exclude from a Treatise of Physick or Natural Philosophy, where the only Design was to inform the Judgment, and enlighten the Mind : In a word,

he wou'd not judge of Poetry as a Naturalist, nor of Natural Philosophy as a Poet, but of both as a Philosopher.

WITH reference to Poetry, with which we are here more particularly concern'd, as in one Sense it may be said to lie level to all Capacities, and that a great Number of Authors, from the earliest Ages downward, have endeavour'd to bring it to Perfection both by their Precepts and Examples; its just and true Principles are most of them fully explain'd, and have been long ago sufficiently confirm'd, and thoroughly unfolded. Yet a Philosopher never implicitly acquiesces in, nor approves of all those Rules he meets with even in the most Celebrated Authors, because he don't always find them agreeable to a Superior and Universal Reason, by which he constantly judges and tries every thing, as the Lawyers still refer all Civil Laws to the Law of Nature, as the Original Standard; according to which they are all ultimately to be judg'd and examin'd, and whose just and natural Consequences, free and easy Emanations, they only ought to be. Upon this Principle we may observe, that the two chief Books, whose Precepts now give Laws in Epic Poetry, I mean *Aristotle's*, and the Treatise

of

of F. *Bossu*, altho' they contain several just Reflections, and many useful Observations, yet want the proper Qualifications that are absolutely necessary and requisite to give Rules, or prescribe Laws on this Head. *Aristotle* is so very dark and obscure an Author, that we are wholly deliver'd up to whatever Sense his Translators and Commentators please to put upon him. 'Tis in vain that *Monf. D.* tells us, that *Monf. Corneille*, assisted by the Rules of *Aristotle*, restor'd Tragedy after its long Declension and Degeneracy. We see by the Remarks that *Monf. D.* himself has made on this Treatise of *Aristotle*, that *Corneille* has not taken one Word of the least Moment or Importance in Poetry, in the Sense *Monf. D.* takes for the true one, and from which alone consequently any Instruction was to be drawn; or if he has taken any, 'twas only to overthrow and confute it: A manifest Proof, that *Aristotle's* Precepts are neither clear nor obvious. 'Tis somewhat unaccountable, that these Gentlemen shou'd require of our Writers Perspicuity, as the lowest Talent and Qualification to excel in Writing, or even pass for a tolerable Author; and this even when they are treating of the most profound Subjects in Natural Philosophy, or the most abstract in



Geometry; and that they can so easily pardon *Aristotle's* Obscurity in writing upon Dramatick Poetry and Tragedy, Subjects relating to publick Diversions and Entertainments, and that therefore ought to have been treated in the most easy and natural Style, and in a way and manner that was familiar and obvious to all Capacities. Dryness alone, but much more when superadded to Darkness, is a considerable Defect and Imperfection in such as undertake to give Rules relating to Poetry and Eloquence. Their principal Care and Design should still be to inspire both the one and the other, by their manner of

\*Book 8. at  
the Begin.

teaching it. *Quintilian* \* observes, that the Ancient Authors, who have wrote with the greatest Care upon Eloquence, were those who themselves were the voidest of it. He shou'd have added therefore, that they were also such as were the most unqualified, and improper to communicate and teach it others. Experience every Day informs us, that Precepts don't imprint themselves easily upon our Mind and Memory, but in Proportion as they are happily and eloquently express'd. Hence it comes to pass, that *Horace* and *Boileau's* Art of Poetry are much more useful than *Aristotle's*; because in those

two the Precepts are deliver'd in so excellent a manner, so clearly, yet so elegantly, as to imprint themselves easily and profoundly in the Memory; and in such a manner that, as it were, invites and engages us by the fresh and new Pleasure they constantly give us, frequently to renew and repeat them.

THIS Dryness and Obscurity that run through *Aristotle's* Poetry, gave Occasion to *Castelvetro* to think it only an Abstract and Epitome of the true one, which he believ'd lost: And as these two Vices and Faults characterize whatever is now left us under *Aristotle's* Name; they have thrown some Readers, whom the Testimonies of the Ancients had prepossess'd in Favour of this Philosopher, into a general Doubt, as to all his Works. For, say they, Can this be the the Man whom *Cicero* himself calls, the Golden Flood of Eloquence? *Veniet Flumen Orationis Aureum fundens Aristoteles*\*; and whom *Quintilian* judges admirable, for the Sweetness and Harmony of his Style, *Eloquendi Suavitate* †. *Strabo* || informs us elsewhere, of the Changes and Alterations the Works of *Aristotle* had undergone before his Time. The Discussion of this Piece of Criticism does not belong to this place, but we may find it exhausted

\* Acad. Quæst. L. qui inscribitur Lucullus.

† B. 10. C. 1.

|| B. 13.

in the Ingenious and Learned Monf. *Bayle's* Dictionary, under the Word *Tyrannion*. We may only observe by the by, how this Uncertainty, which may be extended to a great many other Ancient Remains, I say, how pleasantly it exposes the implicit and blind Admirers of the Ancients, that are so apt to be transported even to Extracy, at Works that have not only been very much alter'd, maim'd and corrupted thro' the Ruins of Time, but even perhaps entirely wrote and compos'd by such ignorant Pretenders, as the Authors, whose they are suppos'd to be, and to whose Name and Title only such great and profound Respect and Esteem is paid, wou'd have scorn'd perhaps to have made them their *Amanuenses*. This is an Inconvenience to which the Philosopher is never expos'd, since the Name of an Author is indifferent to him, and he never judges of the Merit of a Work, but by the intrinsic Value and Excellence he finds in it.

*F. Bossu*, who far excels *Aristotle*, such as we now have him, in Order and Perspicuity; if he's obscure in any Part, 'tis only thro' the blind and servile Regard he pays to his Rules and Authority; and upon the account of the Law which he all along imposes upon himself, of praising  
or



or vindicating *Homer* in every Particular. 'Tis this blind and implicit Veneration, that a Philosopher always esteems the greatest Crime in a Author, the worst and most essential Fault he's capable of. In the 1st Chapter, and at the very Entrance of his Book, *F. Bossu* lays down the whole Scheme and Plan of his Work: And tho' he there at first tells us, That *Arts* have this in common with the *Sciences*, that they are both founded in Reason; yet he afterwards gives this certain and self-evident Principle and Maxim, this pitiful Restriction; viz. That whereas *Sciences* allow to those who would cultivate and improve them, no Liberty of chusing any other Guides or Directors, beside the Principles of Natural Reason; *Arts*, on the contrary, depend in many Particulars upon the Choice and Genius of such as first invented them: So that altho' Reason might have at first given Rules in the Art of Poetry; yet now the Invention of former Poets, and the Choice they were pleas'd to make, have given it its Matter and Form. Hereupon he openly avows and declares, that he won't insist upon all that may have been invented and discover'd in latter Ages; and avoiding therefore whatever Light and Assistances he might have drawn thence, all he

he undertakes, is only a just and exact Analysis of *Homer* and *Virgil*, of *Aristotle* and *Horace*; four Authors that he finds sometimes considerable Difficulty to work and unite into one and the same System. Thus *F. Bossu* has not, in his Performance, show'd that Superiority of Sound Judgment and Good Sense, that Honest and Sincere Deference and Regard to the Dictates and Authority of Reason only, as became a True Lover and Candid Enquirer after Truth; nor that free and impartial Censure of the Faults of his Authors where-ever they occur'd, as was necessary to write up to the Dignity of his Subject, when he undertook to oblige the Publick with a perfect and compleat System of Epick Poetry.

\* Poet. c. 9.  
Or the rem.

IN effect, we ought to apply to Poetry in general, the Just and Noble Idea that *Aristotle* had of Epic, and Tragedy in particular. Both of them, as he \* judiciously observes, ought to be the Representation of a general and universal Action; *i. e.* in order to lay the Plan of an Epick Poem, or a Tragedy, as it ought, we must first imagine an Event or Action, that may be independent upon any particular Person, and that may be proper to insinuate into the Mind some Moral Truth. In the same manner, Poetry should be an Art drawn from  
from

from the purest and most general Principles of Human Reason, independent upon the Example of any particular Poet; and whose sole Scope should be to direct all Poets in the inventing, forming, and finishing their several Works and Compositions, in order to raise and carry them to the utmost Pitch of Perfection and Beauty they are capable of. 'Tis true, that as the Actions and Events which fabulous or true History hath transmitted down to us, help and assist the Imagination to invent proper Subjects for such particular Poems, as we intend to compose; so also the Examples of the most Celebrated Poets, help to fix the true Idea and Notion of a perfect Poem; whose just and proper Rules have been attempted and pretended to be deliver'd and taught us (tho' hitherto but imperfectly and unsuccessfully) by such Authors as have treated the Art of Poetry. Hence it happen'd, that the first Examples always preceeded the first Rules: But for the same Reason it shou'd also have happen'd, that the greater Number of Examples, if we had improv'd them as we ought, should have furnish'd us with clearer, surer, and more general Rules. 'Tis true, as Father *Bossu* says, (*c. i.*) That the Ancients cou'd not foresee what wou'd  
happen



happen after them ; but Father *Bossu*, who had the Advantage of seeing it, might have made it turn to better Account, and rendered it useful and serviceable to his main Purpose and Design ; by shewing, how it might be possible to compose Poems superior to any in former Ages ; where there shou'd have been more Intrigue, and a better Plot ; the Passions more lively touch'd and moved, and wrought up with greater Art and Skill, finer Characters, fuller and stronger Images of the different Posture and Situation of Human Affairs. In a word, more useful and instructive Examples of all Kinds, than there is to be found in any Poems left us by the Ancients. For the Philosopher, who never determines his Judgment by the Sentiments and Opinion of others, yet learns and improves by all that has been said or wrote on the Subject he treats ; and makes use of every thing that can either further inform and enlarge his Mind, or assist and improve his Judgment.

BUT to have done this, it had been necessary for F. *Bossu* to have forsaken the old and beaten System, that makes us consider and suppose the Ancients not only as excellent Models and Patterns for all succeeding Ages, but also as having reach'd and

and attain'd an absolute State of Perfection it self, to which nothing can be added ; and as having exhausted whatever was excellent and beautiful in mental Productions and Compositions : And embrac'd another much more Just and Rational one, that considers the general State of Learning, as extended thro' all Ages, and over all Countries and Nations, under the Image of the Life and Age of a single Person, as divided into the common Periods of Childhood and Infancy, then its Fire and Bloom of Youth ; and lastly, its State of Manhood and full Growth, or Years of Maturity, compleat Strength and Vigor ; to which last Period of Life, Time also adds every Day new and fresh Experiences, and so furnishes and lays up more and more Materials still for the further Improvement in all true Wisdom and Knowledge. Common Sense shews us this shou'd be so ; and a more narrow and critical Examination of this Matter will satisfy us, that so it actually has been, and is. For from the first Original and Infancy of Learning in *Greece*, to the highest Pitch of Improvement and Perfection it ever attain'd in Ancient *Rome* ; to come now no lower down, Human Understanding has visibly and sensibly observ'd this gradual

gradual Progress and Improvement. I place its Infancy in *Homer's* Time and Age; its Fire and Bloom of Youth, at the Time when *Athens* principally flourish'd; its Manhood and full Growth in *Cesar* and *Augustus's* Time. That *Homer* liv'd in the Infancy of this Period, (or when Learning and good Sense was at the lowest Ebb) my whole Book is one continued Proof, That the *Athenians*, who liv'd in the most flourishing Age and State of their Republick, liv'd only during its youthful State; and that Learning, in their Time, attain'd no greater Height, would require a longer Discourse to set in a full and true Light, than the narrow Limits and Bounds of a Preliminary Discourse will admit of; so I shall only here give a small Specimen of a general Essay towards it.

ONE need only read their Authors, to be thoroughly and sufficiently sensible of the Volatile Lightness and Shal- lowness of their Judgment. I don't now speak of that Lightness of Mind that ruin'd their secular Affairs, and which *Demosthenes* so often reproaches 'em with, and with so much Strength and Force; I now only speak of the Lightness  
2 and



and Shallowness of their Judgment in Matters of Learning. Plato alone will furnish us with numerous and authentic Proofs and Testimonies of this; and the Remarks of Mr. D. who has translated several Dialogues of the Divine Philosopher, not only confirm but often, in this Respect, excel and surpass the Text. What meant their Passion and Fury in running after the Sophists in so extravagant a manner, who, as Mr. D. himself owns \*, *were only proper to spoil their Taste, and to corrupt their Judgment and Morals?* They rose before Break of Day, as we may see in the *Protagoras*; to hear those vain aerial Notions, those extreme, subtle Abstractions, and superfine Metaphysical Reasonings and Speculations concerning Virtue and Vice, which *Socrates* refutes by others that are still more so. The Fondness and Passion of this vain and admiring Nation, for this pernicious and ridiculous Set of Men, begun in Favour of *Gorgias* the Founder and Head of that impertinent Sect; and it went so far, that the *Athenians* look'd upon those Days he was to harangue in Publick, as so many Holy-Days: He gain'd such vast Riches, and so prodigious a Treasure among them, that he erected his own Statue in Gold,

C and

\* See Plac.  
in Gorg.  
Plin. B. 33.  
C. 4. c. 1.  
live Rho-  
dig. B. 11.  
C. 22. c.  
B. 19.  
C. 20.  
\* Rem.  
upon The-  
ages,  
P. 451:

aid of  
T. 1. c. 1.  
on A. 11.  
P. 11.

\* See Plat.  
in Gorg.  
Plin. B. 33.  
C. 4. c2-  
live Rho-  
dig. B. 11.  
C. 25. &  
B. 19.  
C. 20.  
and others.

and was carried at his Funeral by Fifteen Men of Quality, and as many young Ladies, who alternately sung his Praises \*. We can yet very well judge of his Talent and Capacity, from two Harangues of his that are still extant, and preserv'd among the Collections of the Greek Orators; one of which is his Encomium, and Panegyrick upon *Helen*; and the other, his Apology for *Palamedes*.

† In his  
Remark  
on Arist.  
Poetry.

BUT what might not be said of the Athenians Passion for Theatrical Performances? Their Esteem and Admiration of this Sort of Poetry, was not a simple Approbation mingled with some Delight and Pleasure, as among us: No, 'twas rather a Kind of Phrenzy or Madness, like that Epidemical Distemper we read of, that made the *Abderites* repeat aloud, in the Streets, the Verses and Poems of *Euripides*. The Athenians, Mr. D. tells us †, were so foolishly fond of those Theatrical Representations, and Publick Spectacles and Diversions, as never to be weary of them; even to that Degree, as to cause to be acted sometimes twelve, at other times sixteen Tragedies in one Day. 'Tis upon this Account and Reason, I appeal from them as proper Judges in this Matter; since 'tis only a just and reasonable Taste of Things, accom-

panied

panied with a Calmness and Tranquility of Mind, that can fit and capacitate us to pass a right and just Judgment concerning them. In effect, the *Greek Tragedy* which *M. Dacier* represents as so far superior to ours, appears to have been only in its first Beginnings and Infancy; whether we consider the Disposition, the Conduct and Plan, or the Manners and Plot, in most of their Pieces and Performances; I don't speak this now of *Eschylus's*, but even of *Euripides's* own Tragedies. In his Supplicants for Instance, *Adrastus* King of *Argos*, accompanied with a grand Chorus of *Argian* Women, came to *Athens*, to beg and implore *Theseus* to oblige the *Thebans* to restore the Bodies of such as were kill'd in the Battel that was fought at the Gates of their City. While *Theseus* was preparing to demand this Restitution of the *Thebans*, and to compel them to it by Force of Arms, if they refus'd; there arrives, in the mean time, a Herald sent by *Creon* King of *Thebes*, commanding the *Athenians* to give no Protection to the King of *Argos*. *Theseus* exasperated at the Injustice of *Creon* with respect to *Adrastus*, and at his Insolence and Boldness in sending such Orders to a free Nation and People, arms and departs the same Instant. He leaves the Theatre



V. 597. where there begins a Chorus of about 40 Verses. This Chorus is interrupted by a Messenger, that brings the News of the Victory *Theseus* obtain'd over the *Thebans* just by the Gates, and at the Foot of their Walls. *Theseus* who had now carried off the Bodies of the *Argians*, causes them to be brought again upon the Stage, V. 826. i. e. in less than 300 Verses he makes a March above Twenty Leagues, and gains a Battel. According to all the just Ideas and Notions of a regular Tragedy, the Subject should at least have ended here: But *Euripides* has not as yet got through above one half of his Play, and the other is taken up in divers Lamentations that are made over the Bodies of the Deceas'd.

*EURIPIDES*, to whom yet I allow all the Merit, his Sweet, Solemn, and Pathetick Manner can challenge or claim, has committed such surprizing Faults against Decorum, that we ought rather to impute it to the Genius of the *Athenians*, who allow'd and approv'd it, than to the Poet who had not been perhaps capable of them, had he wrote for the modern *French Stage*. Thus in his

his *Alceſtis*, about which Mr. *Racine* ſeems to have confounded and baffled all our Criticks, a Slave makes at firſt a beautiful and charming Deſcription of *Alceſtis*'s Readineſs to die amidſt the Embraces of her two Children; but in the following Scene, which begins V. 289. *Alceſtis* repreſents to her Huſband the Obligations he was under to her, for being ready to ſacrifice her Life for his; and the Scene is indeed extreme tender and moving; but then it makes *Admet*'s Character, who accepts this Offer, ſo very Ridiculous, as all the Paſſion and Tenderneſs of *Alceſtis* can never make amends or atone for. Therefore Mr. *Quinault*, who has treated the ſame Subject, has very wiſely and judiciously alter'd this Part; and ſuppos'd that *Alceſtis* dies, not only without making any Merit or Boaſt of her Death to her Huſband, but even before he knew of her Deſign and Reſolution. But here follows one of the moſt ſignal Teſtimonies and Demonſtrations of the Want of Taſte, and Senſe of Decorum in a Nation, with whoſe mighty Politenefs and extreme Delicacy we are ſo much injured, and ſo often upbraided by our great Criticks, and this too with ſuch Scorn and Contempt of our own Manners and Cuſtoms, 'Tis

in the Scene of *Pberes* the Father of *Admet*, with his Son, upon Occasion of this Death : Those who are not able to understand the Original, will perhaps be pleas'd to find here a just and faithful Translation of the whole Scene. It begins Verse 614.

*Pberes.* **M**Y Son, I hither come to sympathize,  
And to condole with you in your  
(Affliction,  
Beyond Dispute a Gen'rous Wife you've lost;  
But what the Laws of rigid Destiny  
Impose (however grievous) you're oblig'd  
In Prudence, and with Patience to support.  
These Ornaments, to grace her Funeral Rites,  
My Care has brought——Receive them, for 'tis fit  
And proper, and due Gratitude requires,  
Of her Defunct, to honour the Remains,  
Whose Life for yours a Sacrifice was made,  
She was unwilling I shou'd childless prove,  
And lose th' Advantage of a Son and Heir;  
And that depriv'd of you, my hoary Head  
Shou'd bend thro' a succeeding Weight of Woe,  
And sink oppress'd with Sorrow to the Grave;  
Such Condescension, such a Noble Deed,  
Reflects a general Lustre on the Sex!  
Oh Thou, who sav'dst my Son, and Us supported,

Just



Just in the Crisis of our sinking State;  
Go hence in Peace, and be for ever bless'd  
Within th' *Elizian* Shades — On such a Wife  
Depends the Glory of the Nuptial State,  
And all its greatest Blessing and Advantage:  
And such in Prudence we shou'd ever chuse.

*Admet.* I to her Funeral never did invite you,  
Nor is your needless Presence welcome here  
At all to me acceptable, nor yields  
Redress or Consolation to my Sorrow.  
My Wife disdains those Ornaments you've brought,  
Nor wants an offer'd Present from thy Hand  
To grace her Funeral. You shou'd have griev'd,  
When I my self of near approaching Fate  
In threatening Danger stood — but then withdrawn,  
You (aged as you are) in Prime of Years,  
Suffer'd a blooming Bride to fall for me;  
And can you now pretended Sorrow shew  
Over her Grave? No, you are not my Father;  
And she who vainly is my Mother stil'd,  
(Whose teeming Womb, as she affirms, produc'd me,  
And sent me to the World) the Truth reviles;  
I am the Son of some *Plebeian* Slave,  
To you when young a secret Present made,  
And suck'd the Paps of her you call your Wife,  
Now you're betray'd, and I of the Deceit  
Assur'd, deny the Title of your Son,  
You all Mankind in Cowardice surpass,  
Who in so great and so advanc'd an Age,  
And whose remaining Stock of Life must be

So near it self consum'd, not dar'd to die  
 To save your boasted Son. To an Alien you,  
 And a weak Woman, all that Glory yield;  
 Whom therefore I in Gratitude herceforth,  
 As Friends and either Parent must esteem,  
 You for my Life, resigning yours, had done  
 Undoubtedly an advantageous Deed;  
 Since by the Law of Nature, but for you  
 Remains a short unprofitable Space  
 Of Time, while I and my dear blooming Wife  
 Thro' Reason might in Expectation see  
 The Prospect of a long and happy Course,  
 Nor I my self shou'd have (as at this Time)  
 Thus vainly sighing and lamenting, pin'd  
 And droop'd beneath the Burthen of her Loss.  
 Already you as much of mortal Bliss  
 Have grasp'd, as the most avaritious Mind  
 Can crave—from your first springing Youth till now,  
 You have possess'd a Monarch's Name and Power,  
 Me for an Heir to your descending Crown  
 And your Dominions, manifest you view,  
 So from the Curse of no Posterity,  
 You are already freed; nor wou'd have left  
 Your House an open Prey to Foreign Power,  
 You cannot justly say, that you to Death  
 Resign'd me for the Breach of Filial Duty,  
 Or Want of the Respect that Children owe  
 Their Parents, for in these I'm far from blame;  
 And now behold th' ungrateful Recompence;  
 You and my Mother jointly have bestow'd,

Haste

Haste then, and other Children procreate,  
Who may support you in your feeble Age;  
In Sicknes, comfort; nourish and relieve you;  
And when you dye, your Fnneral Rites prepare:  
For I refuse t'inter you with these Hands.  
Henceforth, as one who is already dead,  
Regard me; nor more Care, Concern, or Love,  
Expect from me, than the Departed give.  
If I have liv'd to see the ungrateful Day,  
When I my Life from other Hands obtain'd,  
That Person's Son I wou'd my self suppose,  
Her Age alone wou'd cherish and support.  
I find 'tis all ridiculous Pretence,  
When Aged Men for speedy Death exclaim,  
Complaining of the Load of Human Woes,  
And ling'ring Life a grievous Burthen call,  
When pass'd she Sense to relish its Delights;  
Yet if that Death, so seemingly desir'd,  
Approaches, and its frightful Visage shews,  
Instead of yielding it a kind Embrace,  
They fly with Terror from its hated Arms,  
And all their dire Complaints to nothing turn.

**C H O R U S.**

*Princes, forbear each other to revile,  
The present sad Calamity ye know,  
Oh, think ye not enough? And you, Admet,  
Do not to Wrath provoke your aged Sire.*

*Pheres,*



*Pbrees.* My Son, what has your Insolence per-  
(form'd?

Know you to whom you speak? You surely think  
Some *Lydian*, or some *Phrygian* Slave, you treat,  
Bought at a certain Price, and thence have gain'd  
The haughty Privilege to use so ill.

Know you not that from *Thessaly* I came,  
And from a free *Thessalian* Lineage sprung  
Free-born? How comes it then this vile Affront

You give? this base intolerable Wrong?

Was't not by me you vital Breath assum'd,

And visited the World? Did I not make you

My Heir? the Lord and Ruler of my House?

Give you an Education that became

Your Birth and me? nor surely am oblig'd

To yield my Life for yours a Ransom too?

No Law of our Progenitors, or *Greece*,

Commands that Parents for their Sons shou'd die,

If you have happy, or unhappy been,

'Tis to your self you your Condition owe:

From me what you with Reason cou'd require,

You have receiv'd a vast and pompous Train

Of Subjects, whom my dying Father gave,

To you successively I leave to you

Dominions suitable bequeath, Wherein

Have I then wrong'd you? or of what depriv'd you?

Your Life I crave not, as a Debt for mine,

As I to purchase your's my Life refuse;

You your own Being cherish and preserve,

Yet equal Privilege to me deny.

Death's

Death's terrible, and does, succeeding, bring  
A dismal, dark, and everlasting Doom!  
Life's short, but fill'd with numerous Delights!  
With Scandal, and with Ignominy, you  
Your Life preserv'd, and live beyond your Fate,  
By the base Murther of your tender Wife.  
You Wretch! accuse me of unmanly Fear,  
Whose Courage by a Woman's was excell'd:  
She with a Noble Joy the Death embrac'd,  
That Death the fine young Gentleman abhorr'd,  
And perish'd for his sake——A Noble Way  
Your wond'rous Skill and Courage have explor'd  
Your own lov'd Life to save, and to redeem  
Your self from Fate, by sacrificing her.  
And now your Friends, alas! must be accus'd  
Of Want of Courage, which your self ne'er had.  
Silence! and think if Life you dearly prize,  
Mankind an equal Privilege may claim.  
If with this Insolence you still persist  
To treat me, look for suitable Return;  
And whatsoe'er uncourteously you give,  
Expect redoubled in the self same Coin.

C H O R U S.

*Yielding to Wrath too far, you've jointly gone,  
Too harsh and too provoking Terms have us'd;  
In this reproachful manner, aged Sire,  
Forbear t'insult and vilify your Son.*

*Admit.*

*Admet.* Speak what you can, vent all your  
(Stock of Rage,  
For I, what I intended have perform'd.  
If from me you wou'd not ungrateful Truths  
Thus hear—what is injurious and unjust  
To me, you shou'd not thus commit.

*Pheres.* I shou'd  
Be more injurious to my self by far,  
Had I for you, vain Boy, my Life resign'd.

*Admet.* The Life of one almost by Age consum'd,  
Can that compare with one who still enjoys  
His youthful Prime?

*Pheres.* A single Life I hold,  
Nor can, when one is lost, another gain.

*Admet.* Oh! you must believe that you with  
(*Jupiter*  
Possess a Life of an eternal Date.

*Pheres.* You curse your Parents, who are free  
(from Blame,  
From whom you never Injury receiv'd.

*Admet.* You'd put the Fatal Hour far off I see,  
And live but just as long—as e're you can.

*Pheres.* Have you not to the nether World  
Your Wife before me? (dispatch'd

*Admet.* Oh, Ungen'rous Wretch!  
'Twas of your Cowardice a barb'rous Proof.

*Pheres.* You cannot, dare not say for me she dy'd.

*Admet.* Oh, may you have a quick ensuing Cause,  
Both to lament, and to regret my own.

*Pheres.*



*Pheres.* With all the Speed you can, more  
(Wives procure,  
That they for you successively may dye.

*Admet.* How witty now you are? or vainly seem  
So to your self, while your own Infamy  
You only publish?—Who had not the Courage,  
Nor Just and Glorious Sense of needful Honour,  
To suffer for her as you nobly ought.

*Pheres.* Oh, how delightful and how happy too  
'Tis to behold the Sun's illustrious Light!

*Admet.* This Exclamation's cowardly and mean,  
Nor worthy of the Character of Man.

*Pheres.* My Fate with Pleasure wou'd you not  
(behold,  
That so you might triumphantly survive?

*Admet.* When e'er you die, deservedly you'll  
(meet,  
For Glory and Esteem, a gen'ral Scorn.

*Pheres.* Whene'er I die, eternal Rest succeeds;  
Nor will reproachful Noise disturb me then.

*Admet.* Alas! alas! what little Honour dwells  
With Age?

*Pheres.* Your Wife was not of Honour void,  
But with the highest Folly was possess'd.

*Admet.* I pray withdraw, and grant me now at  
(least  
The Privilege to bury her Remains.

*Pheres.* I'll bury her my self, since she from you  
Receiv'd her Fate—your murdering her alone  
Sufficient is. Some of her near Relations

Will

Will most undoubtedly revenge the Deed :  
*Acester* must be very base and mean,  
 To let his Sister's Death unpunish'd go.  
*Admet.* Entirely ruin'd! utterly undone!  
 Oh, may ye jointly prove your Wife and you  
 Depriv'd of Children and Posterity,  
 Ev'n while ye live, as well ye both deserve.  
 Live and grow old, but ne'er expect to be  
 With me the joint Copartners of this Dwelling.  
 Retire, and instantly from hence withdraw;  
 Were it allow'd, in the most solemn manner  
 I wou'd insert it in the Register  
 Belonging to the Commonwealth; That I  
 My Father's House and Family renounce.  
 For us who here remain, let us with Care  
 Convey the Body forth, &c.

IF *Euripides* had many Scenes like this, we  
 must, in our System, have plac'd him even be-  
 fore the Period of Time here assign'd him; I  
 mean in the Infancy of Human Knowledge and  
 Understanding, and made him coæval with *Ho-*  
*mer* himself: For we shall scarce find in him  
 a more open Violation, or a greater Tran-  
 gression of all Decorum; tho' neither shall we  
 ever meet with there so long a Chain of Rea-  
 soning, or so well supported throughout,  
 as appears in this Scene. But we are not  
 now so much concern'd with the two Poets  
 themselves,

themselves, as with the Taste and Judgment of their Applauders and Admirers. Nor will it be sufficient here to say, that the *Greeks*, no more than we now, might not perhaps approve their Poets in every thing : For there are Faults of so gross a Nature, as can never be committed in Nations truly Polite. Ours, for Instance, may let their Poets want Wit, sometimes be cold and insipid ; but can never suffer them to violate and transgress all the Laws of filial Respect and Duty in so shocking a manner, nor all the Rules of Decorum and common Decency, as the *Athenians* frequently suffer'd and permitted theirs to do.

I SHOU'D now give a Specimen of the *Greek Comedy*, such as it occurs in *Aristophanes* ; but find my self herein happily prevented by the Learned and Ingenious Author of the *Short View of the English Stage*, of which an Elegant Translation is lately publish'd in *French*, and printed at *Paris*. The Author, in the 6th Chap. of his Book, having already exhausted this Subject, and treated the Argument with uncommon Judgment and Learning, I chuse therefore rather to present the Reader with this Excellent Passage, as it stands entire in the Original, than either curtail and abridge it,



\* 2. Edit.  
at Lond.  
in 1698.

it, or entertain him with any thing of my own, which would not equal what he has already perform'd on this Subject. It begins Page 36. \*, where the Author draws up his Charge against him under three Heads; First, Accusing him of downright Atheism and Impiety, then of Want of Judgment; and lastly, Of acting against that little Judgment he had.

His first Charge and Accusation, he easily makes good against him, " by comparing his *Nubes* with his other *Plays*. The " Design of his *Nubes* was to expose *Socrates*, and make a Town Jest of him. " Now this Philosopher was not only a " Person of great Sense and Probity, but " was likewise suppos'd to refine upon " the Heathen Theology, to throw off the " fabulous Part of it, and to endeavour " to bring it back to the Standard of Natural Religion. And therefore *Justin Martyr*, and some others of the *Fathers*, " look'd on him as a Person of no Pagan " Belief, and thought he suffer'd for the " Unity of the Godhead. This Man " *Aristophanes* makes fine Sport with, as he " fancies: He puts him in a Fool's Coat, " and then points at him. He makes *Socrates* instruct his Disciple *Strepsiades* in " a new Religion, and tell him, that he

" did

"did not own the Gods in the vulgar No-<sup>Nub. Añ. 1.</sup>  
 tion. He brings him in elsewhere, af-<sup>Sc. 3. p. 104. Ed.</sup>  
 firming, that the *Clouds* are the only <sup>Amstel.</sup>  
 Deities. Which is the same Lash which  
 Juvenal gives the Jews, because they  
 Worshipped but one single Sovereign  
 Being.

*Nil præter Nubes & Cœli numen adorant.* Sat. 14.

"SOCRATES goes on with his Lecture  
 of Divinity, and declares very roundly,  
 that there is no such thing as *Jupiter*.<sup>P. 106.</sup>  
 Afterwards he advances farther, and en-  
 deavours to get *Strepsades* under Articles  
 to acknowledge no other Gods, but *Chaos*,<sup>Nub. p. 110.</sup>  
 the *Clouds*, and the *Tongue*. At last the  
 Poet brings the Philosopher to publick  
 Penance for his Singularities. He sets  
 Fire to his *School* for teaching Young Peo-  
 ple (as he pretends) to dispute against  
 Law and Justice; for advancing Atheistick  
 Notions, and Burlesquing the Religion of  
 the Country.<sup>Añ. 5. p. 176.</sup>

"THAT *Socrates* was no *Atheist*, is clear  
 from Instances enough. To mention but  
 one: The Confidence he had in his *Dæ-*<sup>Plat. Apol.</sup>  
*mon*, or *Genius*, by which he govern'd <sup>Socrat.</sup>  
 his Affairs, puts it beyond all dispute.

D

"How-

"However 'tis plain *Aristophanes* was not  
 "of his Religion. The Comedian was by  
 "no means for correcting the Common Per-  
 "suasion. So that he must either be an  
 "Orthodox Heathen, or nothing at all. Let  
 "us see then with what Respect he treats the  
 "received Divinities. This Play, where  
 "one would not expect it, discovers some-  
 "what of his Devotion. In the beginning  
 "of it *Phidippides*, who was a sort of New-  
 "Nub. p. 36. Market Spark, swears by *Jocky Neptune*,  
 "that he had a strange Kindness for his  
 "Father *Stepsiades*. Upon this the Old  
 "Man replies; No *Jocky*, if you love me;  
 "that Deity has almost undone me. This  
 "was making somewhat bold with *Neptune*,  
 "who was *Jupiter's* Brother, Sovereign of a  
 "whole Element, and had no less than the  
 "Third Share of the Universe! Certainly  
 "*Aristophanes* had no Venture at Sea, or  
 "else must think the *Trident* signified but  
 "very little. But this is meer Ceremony  
 "to what follows. In his first Play, *Plutus*  
 "pretends he had a mind to oblige only  
 "Men of Probity, but *Jupiter* had made  
 "him blind on purpose that he might not  
 "distinguish Honest Men from Knaves:  
 "For to be plain, *Jupiter* had a Pique a-  
 "gainst Good People. Towards the end of  
 "this Comedy, *Mercury* is abused by *Cario*,  
 "and



"and acts a ridiculous, and lessening Part  
 "himself. Afterwards he complains heavily Plut. A. 1.  
Sc. 2.  
 "that since *Plutus* was cured of his Blindness,  
 "the business of Sacrificing fell off, and the  
 "Gods were ready to starve. This *Mercury*  
 "has the same ill Usage with the Poet's  
 "Knaves, Informers, and Lewd Women;  
 "From all this stuff put together, his Mean-  
 "ing is pretty plain, viz. That Religion  
 "was no better than an Imposture support-  
 "ed by Art, and Ignorance. And that  
 "when Men's Understandings were awake,  
 "and their Eyes a little open, they would  
 "have more Discretion than to be at any  
 "expence about the Gods.  
 "This I take to be part of the Moral of  
 "his Fable. If we look farther into him  
 "we shall see more of his Mind. His *Rane*  
 "makes Merry with the Heathen Scheme  
 "of Heaven and Hell. Here *Charon* and  
 "the *Stygian Frogs* are brought in comi-  
 "cally enough. And that you may un-  
 "derstand his Opinion more perfectly we  
 "are told, that He that Bilks his *Catamite*  
 "after a *Sodomitical Abuse*, is thrown into  
 "the Common-shore of *Hades*. And what  
 "Company do you think he is lodg'd  
 "with? Why with those who Perjure  
 "themselves, with those who Kick their  
 "Fathers and Mothers. It seems in the  
 "mish

*Ramp. p. 188.* "Poets Justice a Man might as good be false  
 "to his Oath, as to his Lewdness. To disap-  
 "point the *Stews*, is every jot as great a  
 "Crime, as to fly in the Face of Nature,  
 "and outrage our Parents. His Quartering  
 "his Malefactors thus critically, was with-  
 "out question on purpose to Banter the Per-  
 "swasion of future Punishment. In the  
 "same Play *Xanthias* bids *Eacus* answer him  
 "by *Jove*, "Ος ἡμῶν ἔστιν ὁμομαχῆρας. This  
 "little Scoundrel of a Slave has the Man-  
 "ners to make *Jupiter's* Quality no better  
 "than his own. To go on with him: In  
 "his *Aves* he speaks out to purpose. Here  
 "*Pisibetarus* tells *Epops* that if the *Birds*  
 "would build a Castle in the Air, they  
 "might intercept the Fumes of the Sacri-  
 "fices, and starve the Gods, unless they  
 "would come to, and be Tributary. It  
 "seems the *Birds* had very good Pretences  
 "to execute this Project; for they were an-  
 "cienier than *Jupiter* and *Saturn*, and Go-  
 "vern'd before the Gods: And to speak  
 "truth were more capable of the Function.  
*p. 536.* "Their Adviser goes on to inform them,  
*538. 546.* "that after they had built their Pensile  
 "City, and fortified the Air, their next  
 "business was to demand their ancient So-  
 "vereignty: If *Jupiter* refused to quit,  
 "they were to declare a Holy War against  
 "Him,

"Him, and the rest of the Confederate Gods,  
"and to cut off the Communication between  
"Heaven and Earth. *Pisthaterus* grows p. 542.  
"very warm in his new Interest, and swears  
"by *Jove* that Men ought to Sacrifice to  
"the *Birds*, and not to *Jupiter*. And if p. 582.  
"things came to a Rupture, and *Jupiter*  
"grew troublesome, he undertakes to send  
"a Detachment of Eagles against Him;  
"with Orders to storm his Palace with  
"Flambeaux, and fire it about his Ears.  
"At last to prevent the Calamities of a *Ibid.*  
"War, *Hercules* proposes an Accommoda-  
"tion, and is willing *Jupiter* should Re-  
"sign. *Neptune* calls him a Blockhead for  
"his pains, because he was Heir at *Law*,  
"and after *Jupiter's* Decease was of Course  
"to succeed in his Dominions: Once more,  
"and I have done: In *Eirene*, *Trygaeus*  
"speaks in a menacing way: That unless p. 602.  
"*Jupiter* gave him Satisfaction in his Busi-  
"ness, he would inform against Him as a  
"disaffected Person, and a Betrayer of the  
"Liberties of *Greece*. I might add many o- *Eiren. 616.*  
"ther Instances, and some more Scandalous  
"than any I have mentioned; But these  
"are sufficient to shew the Author's Senti-  
"ment: And is it any wonder an Atheist  
"should misbehave himself in point of Mo-  
"desty? What can we expect less from those



"who laugh at the Being of a God, at the  
 "Doctrines of Providence, and the Distin-  
 "ctions of Good and Evil? A *Sceptick* has  
 "no Notion of Conscience, no Relish for  
 "Virtue, nor is under any Moral Restraints  
 "from Hope or Fear. Such a one has no-  
 "thing to do but to consult his Ease, and  
 "gratify his Vanity, and fill his Pocket.  
 "But how these Ends are compassed, he has  
 "no Squeamishness, or Scruples about it.  
 "Tis true, when the Methods of Lewdness  
 "will take, they are generally most agree-  
 "able. This way suits their Talent, and  
 "screens their Practice, and obliges their  
 "Malice. For nothing is a greater Eye-sore  
 "to these Men, than Virtue and Regularity.  
 "What a pleasure is it then to be admired  
 "for Mischief, to be reveng'd on Religion,  
 "and to see Vice prosper and improve under  
 "our Hands! To return:

"BESIDES *Aristophanes's* Atheism, I  
 "have a Second Objection to his Authority,  
 "and that is want of Judgment. If we  
 "examine his *Plays* we shall find his Cha-  
 "racters improper, or un-uniform; either  
 "wrong at first, or unsteady in the right.  
 "For the purpose. In his *Nubes*. A. 3. S. 3.  
 "p. 146, 150. He puts dirty expressions in  
 "the Mouth of his Man of Probity, makes  
 "him

"him declaim viciously against Vice, and  
 "correct Scurrility with Impudence. Now  
 "what can be more idle and senseless, than  
 "such Conduct as this? Especially when  
 "this *Justus* as he calls him had told them  
 "in the beginning of his Speech, that Peo-  
 "ple used to be well dash'd for such Fool-  
 "ing, when Government and Discipline  
 "were in their due Force. The *Chorus* of p. 142.  
 "his *Rank* slides into the same Inconsistency p. 200.  
 "of Precept, and Practice. Farther, in the  
 "Progress of this Play; *Aeschylus* falls a  
 "rallying contrary to his Humour, and jests  
 "away his own Arguments at a very un-  
 "seasonable Juncture, when he was dispu-  
 "ting for no less Prize than the Laureatship.  
 "This *Tragedian*, after he had play'd a p. 242.  
 "little with the Story of *Bellerophon*, goes  
 "on in the same strain; and charges *Eu-*  
 "*ripides* that he had furnish'd all sorts of  
 "People with Sawciness and Prattle. The  
 "Schools and Academies were spoil'd by this  
 "means; So that the Boys were often  
 "whipp'd, and the Boatswains drubb'd, for  
 "their Chattering. These Comical Levi- p. 244  
 "ties come with an ill Grace from *Es-*  
 "*chylus*. His Character was quite diffe-  
 "rent both in Reality, and in the Play  
 "before us. He is all along represented as  
 "a Person of a serious Temper, of a re-  
 "serv'd

"serv'd Loftiness, Cholerick, and tender  
 "of his Honour to an Excess, and almost  
 "in a Rage at the Affront of a Rival, and  
 "being forc'd to enter the Lists with *Eu-*  
 "*ripides*. The Case standing thus, neither  
 "the Man, nor the Business, would admit  
 "of Drolling. Another Instance of his  
 "want of Conduct we have in his *Concio-*  
 "*natores*. Here *Blepyrus* and some others  
 "of his Legislative Assembly, talk at a very  
 "dirty insipid rate. The lowest of the  
 "*Mob*, can hardly jest with less Wit, and  
 "more Lewdness. And to make their Di-  
 "scourse more remarkable; These doughty  
 "Members were just going to the *House*,  
 "and had their Heads full of the Good of  
 "the Nation, when they entertain'd them-  
 "selves thus decently. And are these little  
 "Buffoons fit to consult *de Arduis Regni, &c.*  
 "to give Authority to Law, and Rules for  
 "publick Life? Do's Ribaldry and Non-  
 "sence become the Dignity of their Station,  
 "and the Solemnity of their Office? To  
 "make his *Parliament-Men* play the Fool  
 "thus egregiously, must needs have a great  
 "deal of Decorum, and State-Policy in the  
 "Contrivance; And is just as wise as if a  
 "*Painter* should have Drawn them in the  
 "Habit of *Jack-Puddings*, and *Merry An-*  
 "*drews*. But *Aristophanes* has still higher  
 "Flights

p. 700.

p. 708.



"Flights of Absurdity. He won't so much  
"as spare the Gods, but makes them act  
"these little Parts of Clownishness and In-  
"famy. *Bacchus* and *Hercules* in his *Rane*  
"are forced to talk Smut, and rally like  
"Link-Boys, and do almost all the Tricks of  
"Bartholomew-Fair. To mention something  
"that will bear the quoting. *Bacchus*  
"enquires of *Hercules* the readiest way to  
"Hades, or the other World. He bids him  
"either Hang, or Poyson himself, and he  
"cannot miss the Road. This is *Hercules's*  
"Humour to a Tittle! And represents him  
"as much to the Life, as an *Ape* would to *Rine p.*  
"do the *Grand Signior* at a publick Au-186 p.182.  
"dience! This with a short Sentence or  
"two of Lewdness, is the hardest of *Her-*  
"cules his Usage: And 'tis well he escaped  
"so; for *Bacchus* is treated much worse.  
"He appears under the disadvantages of a  
"Clownish Debauchee, and a Coward. And *p.192,194.*  
"is terribly afraid of a *Spectre*. When 196.  
"he comes before *Aacus*, this Judge is very  
"rough with him; and tries his Pretences  
"to a Deity by Bastinado: *Bacchus* howls *As.2.Sc.6*  
"in the drubbing and had almost spoil'd all.  
"Now do's this paultry Behaviour agree  
"with the Heathen Theology, with the  
"common Opinion concerning *Bacchus* and  
"Hercules?

*Hercules*? Do's a *Blew-Cap* and a *Ladle*,  
 become the Sons of *Jupiter* and the Ob-  
 jects of Religious Worship? Those who  
 at the lowest, were counted the Con-  
 querors of the World, and more than  
 Men both by Birth and Enterprize? So-  
 phocles and Euripides make these two  
 Persons manage at a quite different rate  
 of Decency. 'Tis no Defence to say  
*Aristophanes* wrote Comedy, and so was  
 obliged to make his Scenes more divert-  
 ing. This Excuse I say is defective; for  
 a Comedian ought to imitate Life and  
 Probability, no less than a Tragedian.  
 To metamorphose Characters, and pre-  
 sent Contradictions to Common Belief, is  
 to write *Farce* instead of *Plays*. Such  
 Comedians like *Thespis* ought to have a  
 travelling Stage, and take the Air with  
*Porcupines* and *Dromedaries*. If 'tis said  
 that Gravity and Greatness do's not suit  
 the Complexion and Entertainment of  
 Comedy. To this I answer, that there-  
 fore the Persons should be chosen accord-  
 ingly. They should have nothing in  
 their known Humour and Condition, too  
 Noble and solemn for Trifling. 'Tis Ho-  
 race's Advice

Aut famam sequarè, aut convenientia finge  
 Scriptar. *De H. Art. Poet. v. 11*  
 Let us remember that Operations  
 "always resemble the Nature from whence  
 "they flow. Great Persons should there-  
 "fore have a correspondent Behaviour af-  
 "signed them. To make Beings much Su-  
 "perior to the Biggest of Mankind, talk  
 "below the Least, is absurd and ridiculous.  
 "This *Aristophanes* seems sensible of in his  
 "Defence of *Æschylus*. Here *Euripides* ob-  
 "jects to *Æschylus*, that he was too rum-  
 "bling, noisy, and bombastick, over af-  
 "fecting that which *Horace* calls

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242.

*Ampullas, & sesquipedalia Verba.*

To this *Æschylus* answers, that the  
 "Thoughts and Designs of *Heroes* must be  
 "deliver'd in Expressions proportioned to  
 "their Greatness. It being likely, that the  
 "Demi-Gods spoke up to their Dignity  
 "and Statute. And as they were distin-  
 "guish'd by the Richness of their Habit,  
 "so they had a more Magnificent Lan-  
 "guage than other Mortals. To this *Eu-  
 ripides* replies nothing; from whence you  
 "may conclude the Poet thought the Apo-  
 "logy



Rane A. I.  
Sc. I. Con-  
cionat.

“logy not unreasonable. In short, *Ari-*  
“*stophanes* had Sense, but he does not al-  
“ways use it. He is not equal, and uni-  
“form. Sometimes you have him flat and  
“foolish. A good while together. And  
“where he has Spirit, ’tis oftentimes la-  
“wished away to little purpose. His Buf-  
“foonry is commonly too strong for his  
“Judgment. This makes him let fly his  
“Jests without regard to Person or Occa-  
“sion: And thus by Springing the Game  
“too soon, the Diversion is lost. I could  
“make several other Material Objections  
“against the Conduct of his *Plays*; but  
“this being not necessary I shall observe  
“in the

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238.

3d. Place. “THAT notwithstanding  
“the scandalous Liberty for which *Aristo-*  
“*phanes* is so remarkable; yet in his  
“Lucid Intervals, when Sense and Sobriety  
“return upon him, he pronounces against  
“his own Practice. In the Contest between  
“*Æschylus* and *Euripides*, *Bacchus* is made  
“the Umpire of the Controversy. *Æschy-*  
“*lus* begins with a Question, and asks  
“*Euripides* what ’tis which makes a Poet  
“admired? He answers, ’Tis for the Ad-  
“dress of his Conduct, and the handsome  
“Turns of Morality in his Poems. ’Tis  
“because

“because his Performance has a Tendency  
 “to form the Audience to Virtue, and Im-  
 “provement. *Æschylus* demands of him  
 “farther; But suppose you debauched the  
 “Age, and made an Honest and a Brave  
 “People lewd, and good for nothing,  
 “what do you deserve then? Here *Bac-*  
 “*chus* interposes, and cries out, what does  
 “he deserve? A Halter! pray don’t ask to  
 “plain a Question. And afterwards we  
 “are told, that Poets are valuable only for  
 “describing Things useful in Life and  
 “Religion, for polishing Inventions, and  
 “setting off great Examples with Lustre  
 “and Advantage. In the Progress of the p. 240.  
 “Dispute, *Æschylus* taxes *Euripides* with  
 “being too uncautious in his Represen-  
 “tations; and tells him that Poets ought  
 “to conceal that which is vicious in Story;  
 “and entertain with nothing but Virtue,  
 “and Sobriety: He goes on reprimanding  
 “*Euripides* for his Dramatick Incests,  
 “Strumpets, and Amours: And as for  
 “himself, to his best Remembrance, He ne-  
 “ver brought any Love-Intrigues upon the p. 242,  
 “Stage. 244.

“THIS is very significant Expostula-  
 “tion: And contains very good Rules for  
 “the Trial of the *Muses*: But if the *Athe-*  
 “*nian*

"*nian Stage*, should be obliged to this  
 "Test; *Aristophanes* must set fire to it;  
 "and that with much more reason than to  
 "*Socrates* his School. Now that *Aeschylus*  
 "spoke *Aristophanes*'s Sense is pretty plain:  
 "For first; As to the Business of Love;  
 "*Aristophanes* always declines it; He never  
 "patches up a Play with Courtship, and  
 "*Whining*, though he wrote nothing but  
 "*Comedy*. In the next place the Chorus;  
 "which is usually the Poet's Interpreter;  
 "speaks honourably of *Aeschylus*, even to a  
 "Preference; And at last Judge *Bacchus*  
 "gives Sentence for him.

p. 255,  
 267.

"Thus we see *Aristophanes* confutes  
 "his own Lewdness, and comes in Evi-  
 "dence against himself. This, with the  
 "other Two Exceptions I have made good  
 "against him, are sufficient, &c. Thus far  
 "the Learned Mr. Collier.

"This Author seems not in the least  
 "prejudiced against the Greek Dramatick  
 "Writers, since, on the contrary, he very  
 "much praises, and highly extols *Euri-*  
 "pides, \* for the great Modesty of his  
 "Compositions and Plays; having, it  
 "seems, forgot the Chorus of his B.A.G.

\* p. 30, 31.

CHAE,



CHÆE, in the Tragedy that bears that Title, and the Discourse of *Silenus* in the *Cyclops*. This kind Indulgence, if not Partiality rather in their Favour, gives his Judgment, when forced to Censure and Condemn them, so much greater Weight and Authority. After therefore, having convicted *Aristophanes*, not only of open and avow'd Atheism, a scandalous Dissolution and Prostitution of Manners, but also of great want of Judgment, telling us \* *That if we exa-* \* p. 43:  
*mine his Plays thoroughly, we shall find most,*  
*or all his Characters improper, or un-uniform;*  
*either false or wrong at first, or unsteady in the right, &c.* 'tis certain nothing can be more true or just, than his Censure and Decision; for if we find in him all the Wit, Buffoonry, and Farce of our old *Italian Comedy*, we find also all its Lewdness and Immorality. I can't enough admire therefore, at Mr. *Racin's* Assertion, in the Preface to his *Litigants* or *Wranglers*, where he affirms and lays it down as a certain Truth, and general Maxim, that *whenever the Athenians laugh'd at their publick Theatres, we may be sure it was at nothing Trifling, or any thing that was Simple or Mean; and that whenever they seem'd pleas'd,*

or

or much delighted this way, at any of their publick Diversions and Entertainments of this Kind, the Ridicule must certainly have been well founded, and extreme Just and Natural. I don't know what Name or Title Racine will please to give to small petty Jest, all whose Wit lay in some poor Double Entendre, or such other mean and poultry Witticisms, whose Spirit and Raillery, only consisted in perpetual Hints and Allusions to the grossest Lewdness and Obscenities with which *Aristophanes* so much abounds.

THE Romans happily avoided all these Inconveniences. I don't believe 'tis possible to add any Thing to the Nobleness of their Thoughts and Conceptions, to the Delicacy and Fineness of their Sentiments and Notions, or to the Propriety and Justness of their Stile and Diction; most of their great Authors, indeed, carried all Decorum and Elegance to the greatest Height. And notwithstanding Mr. Dacier's Authority, who tells us, that the Romans could never surpass, nor excel the Grecians, \* he'll pardon me, if I prefer Cicero's Opinion and Account of this Matter, and on this Occasion rather chuse to

\* Preface  
to the new  
Edition of  
his Ho-  
race, p.  
115.

to submit to his Judgment and Authority than his, who on the contrary tells us, that the *Romans*, as was clear and manifest from many Evidences and Proofs, shew'd much more Wit and Judgment, than any other Nation. And in another Place, I always thought, says he, that our *Romans* discover and invent with more true Wisdom and Judgment, than the *Greeks*, and that they have very much improved whatever they borrow'd from them, in all the Subjects they thought worthy their Study and Application. *Ingenia vero nostrorum hominum, ut multis Rebus possumus Judicare multum Cateris hominibus Omnium Gentium præsiterunt* \*. *Meum judicium* \* De Orat. B. I. *semper fuit nostros aut invenisse per se sapientius quam Græcos aut accepta ab illis fecisse meliora quæ quidem digna statuissent in quibus elaborarent* †. Cicero had † Tusc. Quæst. B. I. Reason to speak thus, even before he had seen the great Historians and Poets of his own Nation. For as soon as the *Romans* apply'd themselves in Earnest, to History and Poetry; in these Two, as well as in all other kind of Writing, they vastly surpass'd and excell'd the *Græcians*; with Reference even to Tragedy it self, about which there may be the most

E Ground



Ground and Scope here for Cavil; and they may seem to have the least Reason to boast their Superiority. They made no Scruple or Difficulty of comparing, nay preferring the Tragedy of *Thyestes*, wrote by their Poet *Varius*, to any the greatest and perfectest Performance, that ever appear'd upon the *Athenian* Theatre.

THE Admirers and Defenders of *Homer* shou'd not oppose our System, nor this Gradation: It being the only Means now left, to save his Reputation, and do Justice to his Character; and 'tis thus that Philosophy makes his true Apology, and just Encomium. His fond and blind Admirers have ruin'd him, by maintaining that his Works were absolutely Perfect, with respect to all Ages: But the Philosopher, who makes the true System of the Human Mind and Understanding, the Subject of his Principal Study and Application, knows how to Transport himself into the remotest and earliest Ages of the World, and reflecting on the great Darkness and Ignorance that was inseparable from them, he justifies an Author of all the Faults that were merely owing to the Time and Age in which he liv'd. I have shew'd in the Course of the following Work, that  
*Homer,*

*Homer*, with respect to his own Age and Time, is highly worthy of Censure and Blame, and obnoxious on many Accounts, whether we consider his Gods, having made *Jupiter* wicked, and *Minerva* foolish, tho' the old Mythology, and fabulous History, might have instructed him better, how to have given us juster, and more becoming Characters of both: Or whether we consider his Men, by proposing to us for his Heroe, a fierce, cruel, and unjust Person; tho' long before his Time, Men had much juster and truer Idea's of Heroick Virtue: I have also observ'd several Particulars, in which it had been easy for him to have corrected the false Taste of his Age, by the easiest and simplest Dictates of common Sense, and natural Morality: We must conclude from an infinite Number of particular Observations that I shall make, in the Course of my Criticism, that he had naturally a confused and irregular Imagination; and in whatever Age he had liv'd, this Fault wou'd have appear'd more or less. But to do him all the Justice possible, I'll never quarrel with any, who owning the Blemishes and Faults which a sound Judgment, and right Reason, must discover in him, will

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only vindicate and defend those of his Age. I'll even further own, that he must have had a good deal of Genius to do what he did in such a Time, and in such an Age; since in reality, the chief Scope and Design of Philosophy still remains and subsists, which is to prove, that in Polite Learning, and the *Belles Lettres*, as well as in the Rational and Philosophical Sciences, Men have been capable a long Time of esteeming and admiring, what very little deserv'd it. Thus the constant and general Admiration, that *Homer's* Poems have hitherto received, is so far from shaking, or in the least inducing me to change and alter my Design and Undertaking, that on the contrary, 'tis this Esteem and Admiration it self, so far as it is ill-grounded, that is the chief Motive, the principal Reason and Object of my Criticism.

BUT it will be said, that the *Romans*, who were so Superiour to the *Greeks*, by the Justness of their Taste, the Strength and Solidity of their Judgment, and by the great Reach and Extent of their other Talents in the Opinion of *Cicero*; these *Romans*, I say, have yet highly esteem'd *Homer*: How then comes



comes it, that he shou'd now be obnoxious to so many, and such severe Censures? The Solution of this Difficulty depends upon the Continuation of our System of the Human Mind. It wou'd, indeed, at first sight seem, that the Gradation were at a full Stop, and shou'd here terminate and end; and that having placed the Infancy of Knowledge and Learning in *Homer's* Time, its Youthful State in the most flourishing times of the *Athenian* Republick; and its State of full Growth and Maturity in the Days of *Cesar* and *Augustus*, there remains nothing further for us to aim at, or so much as to wish and desire, but only to continue in this happy State and Condition. We have even here further against us, the long and fatal Interruption given to all Learning and good Sense, occasion'd by the Inundation of the *Goths* and *Vandals*, upon the Destruction of the *Roman* Empire, and that had very near brought along with it, the utter Extinction of all Knowledge and Science. We must freely own, that it subjected our own Nation in particular, to a long State of *Gothick* Ignorance and Barbarity. But it is now about Two Centuries since

we begun to get out of it, and rise above it. And I find two different Periods of Time in this Interval, that are chiefly remarkable. The first begins with the Reign of *Francis* the First, who was the great Restorer, and the Principal Protector and Encourager of Modern Learning, and who first deliver'd us from that State of Barbarity and Ignorance, into which we were so long sunk. But all his Care cou'd go no further, nor reach no higher, than to restore the Esteem and Honour that was due to the Antient Authors, and which then begun again to be studied in earnest, and imitated too in their own Language: In a word, the Learned Men under his Reign, and the Four following, were only, if I may so express it, *Greeks* and *Romans* reviv'd, or rather their meer Echo's: The *French* did not, as yet, excel, or shine as *French*, or as having any Language or Genius of their own. The Reign of *Henry* the Great, is the Transition and Passage from the First to the Second Period of Time in the Interval above-mention'd; because it was under this Reign, that *Malherbe* the first that deserves the Name of *French* Poet, liv'd and flourish'd. *Malherbe* living long after the Death of *Henry* the

*the Great*, and pretty far in the Reign of *Lewis the XIII<sup>th</sup>*. saw *Balzac* perform in Prose, what he had done before in Poetry and Verse. Both of 'em at last, had the Happiness to fall under the Ministry, and consequently the Protection and Encouragement of the great Cardinal *Richlieu*, who was indeed the true Father and Original of all the *French* Learning and Eloquence. 'Twas he that first conceiv'd, and reduc'd to Practice, the Noble Scheme and Plan of the *French* Academy, the principal Design, and general Object of all whose Application and Studies, is the Improvement and Perfection of our own Language: Nor was he deceiv'd in his Expectations; for 'tis out of this Illustrious Society, that the great and real Restorers or all the noblest Authors of the *French* Eloquence and Poetry, have indeed arose and proceeded.

MADAM D. tells us, \* *That after the Restoration of Learning, there was seen arise all of a sudden, Persons of profound Knowledge and Judgment, and of exquisite Taste, who publish'd immortal Works. Our Poetry especially, adds she hereupon, very much chang'd its Form*

\* In her *Causes of the Corruption of Taste*, p. 22.



† Ib. p.  
23.

• Ib.

and Appearance, &c. Whence she concludes, † *That it was the Study of the Greek and Roman Authors alone, that drew us out of the State of Darkness and Ignorance, into which before we were so deeply sunk; and that 'twas by this Means, \* That our Tragedy and Comedy in particular have been carried to such a Height, as now to be able to bear some Comparison or Parellel, even with that of the Antients themselves.* Madam D. by this Concession and Acknowledgment, makes some small Amends for the Injury Mr. D. her Husband did us, in his Remarks upon *Aristotle's Poetry*; which he seems to have wrote with no other View, than that of preferring the *Greeks* infinitely before us. Yet even here she is also mistaken, by confounding the Two Periods of Time we distinguish'd above, at the Restoration of Learning. 'Tis not true, that our Poetry chang'd for the better, by the first Studies that were made of the Antient Authors: On the contrary, *France* never had so bad, nor so wretched Poets as those who in *Francis* the First Reign, and afterwards, employed and addicted themselves wholly to a Servile Imitation of the Antients; such as *Ronsard* and

and *Jodelle*, who really might be said to write only *Greek* Odes, and Dramatick Pieces, in the *French* Language. Our Poetry in general, nor our *Drama* in Particular, were never improved or brought to any tolerable State, or Degree of Perfection, till the Time we begun to observe and study the true Propriety and Genius of our own Language, and the great Nicety and Decorum of our own Customs and Manners. I don't deny, that the Reading of the Antients was very useful to the best and greatest of our *French* Authors; but then, instead of wholly addicting, or subjecting themselves to the Taste and Manner of the Antients, as some among them thought they ought to do; they have in reality, though perhaps without any form'd Design or Intention of doing so, subjected them to ours. Mr. *Boileau* was pleas'd, and catch'd at every Opportunity he cou'd, of throwing something of the Antient Air and Manner into all his Compositions and Works; but we think our selves much more oblig'd to the Antients, especially the *Greek* Writers, when we find in them any thing of the Modern. When *Plato*, for Instance, remains, as it were, shut  
and

and wrap'd up in the Sophistical Jargon, and the impenetrable Obscurity and Darkneſs of what they term his Sublime and Divine Metaphyſicks, he is then indeed an Antient. But when he writes and expreſſes any Thing with Clearneſs and Perſpicuity, or delivers what is plainly Rational and Senſible, eſpecially if he enters into any Detail hereupon, and comes to Particulars, as when in his firſt *Alcibiades*, he deſcribes the Manners and Cuſtoms of the *Lacedemonians* and *Persians*; 'tis then that Mr. D. makes the following Marginal Annotation: *This is one of the fineſt and moſt beautiful Paſſages in all Antiquity.* i. e. In other words, this is wrote in the Modern Taſte, which is that of Perſpicuity and Clearneſs, an admirable Art and Talent effectually to engage a Reader.

BUT 'tis not for this only, that I eſteem and prefer the Modern Knowledge and Learning, nor to this alone, that I confine and limit their Superiority over the Antients, and place their chief Merit and Excellence. For if we were only to conſider'd here, the Art of Writing, with as great Judgment, as Politenefs and Elegance, the *Romans*, and the *Greeks* who



who were acquainted with the *Romans*, and liv'd Cotemporary with them, such as *Diodorus*, *Plutarch*, *Lucian*, and several others, were in this respect perhaps, nothing inferior to us. Nay, I shou'd rather be apt and inclin'd to think, that the Glory and Extent of the *Roman Empire*, might have given their Great Men, such as *Cesar* and *Cicero*, who added to an excellent Talent of writing their Personal Experience and Knowledge in the Conduct and Management of the greatest Affairs of the World, a Noble Air and Dignity we want, and possibly can never, by all our Study and Application, reach or attain. 'Tis true, that we now knowing the State and Government of the *Roman Empire* from History, have in this respect an Advantage over the *Greeks*, who cou'd not foresee what wou'd happen after them: But this Historical Knowledge will never equal us to those, who themselves made part of, manag'd and govern'd that great Empire. So I won't pretend to Rival or Contest any Superiority with them on this Head: But then to this Advantage and Excellence of theirs, I oppose the new Method of Philosophy that was first introduc'd into the World by the famous

\* p. 22.

mous *Des Cartes*, about the Middle of the last Century, and by him apply'd to the Study and Knowledge of the System of Nature, in the Reign of *Lewis* the Thirteenth. 'Twas then indeed, it might justly be said, that the true Principles and Laws of Nature, having first begun to be found out and unravell'd, banish'd and expell'd from our Books and Writings on this Subject, to use Madam D's \* own Expressions, both the Barbarity the Jargon, and Sophistry of the old Philosophy. It might then be said on this Occasion, continues she, that a God had come down to clear this Chaos, dissipate the Darknefs, and create Light. Natural Philosophy, and all the Mathematical Sciences, have since receiv'd a vast and prodigious Increase and Improvement, under the Reign of *Lewis* the Fourteenth, by the great and generous Encouragement he has given them, and the many and frequent Favours he has conferr'd and bestow'd upon Men eminent in those Sciences so worthy a wise and heroick Prince; and by the Erecting another Academy, of which a Minister, zealous for the Glory of *France*, laid the Foundation, and to which some Illustrious Persons, still Living, whom we all know, have since obtain'd and procur'd

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its last so gloriously improv'd, and now most happy and flourishing Form and Establishment. Thus the Polite Learning of *France*, or their *Belles Lettres*, and the Study of Mathematicks and Natural Philosophy, begun near about the same Time, have both equally improv'd together, and reciprocally communicated mutual Advantages one to another. Natural Philosophy, and the Mathematicks, have bestow'd and endow'd the *Belles Lettres*, with all the Exactness and Justness of their Reasoning; and they again in Exchange, have given and communicated to the Sciences, all the Beauties and Ornaments of their Politeness and Eloquence. But the better to strengthen and improve this happy Union and Harmony, that alone can raise and bring Learning to its utmost Perfection, we must necessarily reduce both to one common Principle, and which can be no other than the Philosophical one, we describ'd and defin'd at the beginning of this Discourse. 'Twas in the *French Academy* (for to it must be ascrib'd this Honour and Glory) that there first arose the true Idea and Notion of comparing those Two different Sorts of Learning, and of reducing each to the Principles of original



ginal Reason and examining both by its genuine and impartial Decisions and Determinations, and inferring from the false and ill-grounded Esteem and Veneration that had been given the old Philosophers, it might perhaps be no less necessary to examine more narrowly than as yet had been done, into what was said by their other Authors, whether Historians, Poets, or Orators. The Opening and Progress of this Dispute, finished and perfected what had been before so happily begun, even the Reinstating Human Nature in all its just Rights and Privileges, and restoring to Human Understanding, its chief Dignity and Glory, in a just Freedom of Thought, by rescuing and delivering it from that ignominious, and Superstitious Yoke of a implicit Submission and Subjection to the Authority of the Antients, and from that of all Prepossession and Prejudice in the Polite Learning, and the *Belles Lettres*, as it before had done in Matters of Science and Philosophy. This is what may be said properly and peculiarly to distinguish us from, and to raise and advance us above the *Romans*. They had indeed Strength and Force enough to avoid

imitating any of the Faults and Vices of the *Greek* Authors, and to surpass and excel their Masters ; but most of them did not sufficiently reflect on their own proper Excellence and Superiority, or had not Force and Courage enough to propose it, as a Pattern and Model for others to imitate and follow. And this was the State and Condition we our selves were in before the famous Dispute concerning the respective Merits and Excellenc's of the Antients and Moderns. *Longinus* assigned the Cause of the Declension and Degeneracy of Knowledge and Taste among the *Greeks* of his Time, to the State of Slavery and Misery, to which they were then reduced : This undoubtedly might contribute partly towards it. But strictly and properly speaking, the Mind of Man is capable of no other Degeneracy, knows no Subjection or Slavery, besides that of its own Passions, and Prejudices : And as these have obtain'd and prevail'd down to our own Age, there never cou'd before, be any just Judgment past, nor true Value and Esteem made of the Antient Writings, that was strictly and exactly proportion'd to their intrinsic Worth and Excellence.

Excellence; the Prepossessions and Prejudices of this and former Ages, having hitherto placed them beyond the Reach of a Rational and Impartial Criticism. But notwithstanding this, I am far from adopting all *Perrault's* System. We may see, by what I have already said of the *Romans*, that I have for the most of them a profound Esteem; and with respect to the *Greeks* themselves, I don't include them all in an equal Condemnation; for I very much distinguish from the Generality of their Writers, a *Demosthenes*, *Thucydides*, and some others. In a word, I adopt here no part of Mr. *Perrault's* System, but what concerns *Homer* himself. Madam D. thought she had presented the Publick with an Object of Contempt and Horror, when she told them, \* *That it was from the French Academy had proceeded all the Criticisms that had of late appear'd against Homer*; which is much the same as if she had said, that 'twas from the Academy of Sciences, there had proceeded the best Confutations of *Aristotle's* Philosophical System and Opinions. When *Homer* some Years hence, shall be every where upon the foot Philosophy demands and requires, it had indeed been Matter of just Reproach

\* In her  
Causes of  
Cor. p. 32.



proach to the Academy, if the first Ray of that Rational and Philosophical Light that dissipated and scatter'd the thick Mist and Darkness that had so long o'erspread the Face of Polite Learning, and the *Belles Lettres*, having appear'd since the Institution of that Noble Assembly, had not first and originally proceeded from that Illustrious Society. 'Tis true, Mr. *Perrault* seem'd baffl'd in this Controversy by *Boileau*, because he used some false and insufficient Arguments and Reasonings to defend his Cause, or to speak more justly because he was the first, who made this terrible Attack upon the Authority of the Ancients, and open'd this Important Debate. And yet, as the Fall of *Aristotle* had already in good Measure prepared Men's Minds to throw off their blind Admiration of Antiquity; the Opinion of Mr. *Perrault*, however injuriously treated and insulted with so much unjust Ignominy and Reproach, and seemingly baffled and triumph'd over, has notwithstanding made a surprizing progress in the Publick. Mr. D—— saw and complain'd of this long ago on Occasion of *Achilles* Buckler. *Julius Scaliger*, says he, \* is the first and only Person that in the last Age was so bold as to venture to Censure *Homer*. But now, *Hunc*

\* *Arist.*  
*Poet. p. 186.*

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*tota armenta sequuntur*, he is follow'd by vast Multitudes.

MR. *La Motte* has already shew'd us a Number of very considerable Authors in all Ages that were no Friends to *Homer*; 'tis true, that most of them after having criticiz'd and censur'd him in certain Particulars, do in general praise and commend him for the rest: But in collecting all their Censures and Criticisms, and relating only such as are just and reasonable, and which the generality of Readers cou'd not reject, but must needs embrace and accept, *Homer* wou'd fall, and his general Reputation and Character be absolutely sunk and ruin'd. This wou'd be a Collection of meer Erudition and Criticism, of which it were easy to compile a vast Volume, which perhaps may one time or other be publish'd, if it shall be judg'd useful or expedient. Tho' indeed Prejudice often blinds us as to original Testimonies and Facts themselves, Monsieur and Madam *Dacier* are not ignorant of the Testimonies that may be adduc'd on this Head; they don't want to be appriz'd or inform'd about them, but they believe others are ignorant of them. I shall only now alledge one Author more who liv'd soon after *Scaliger*; 'tis *Daniel Heinsius*; he's gone much further than any before

before him : For in the 17th Chapter of his Treatise of Tragedy, he says, That *Homer*, such as we now have him, being fill'd up and abounding, only with the Ridiculous Absurdities, the poor abject Meanness's and Impertinences of the Grammarians, is only a faint Image and Shadow of the True and Genuine *Homer*, which they have so cruelly maim'd and disfigur'd ; so that much the best Edition, that remains of him is, the Imitation *Virgil* has left us in his Poem \*. But in the time of *Scaliger* and *Heinsius*, and much more in that of their Predecessors, the Age of Philosophy had not then commenc'd, nor was yet begun ; and therefore the Opinion and Judgment of those Great Men did not more generally prevail and obtain. We must also own, that most of the Criticisms and Censures that remain of the *Greeks*, partake too much of their Natural Temper, *i. e.* of their Lightness and want of Judgment. Those of *Zoilus*, for instance, are as poor and empty as the

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\* Carnifices profecto isti, non Homerum nobis sed Homeri Umbram aut Umbraticam Imaginem dederunt. Dum pro suo quisque Arbitrio aut Mutant, aut Reponunt, aut Ejiciunt quæ lubet — ut mihi Optima Homeri Editio, Virgilianum Poëma videatur. *Dan. Heins. de Tragedie Constitut. c. 17.*



Praises and Commendations of *Eustathius*. But since Mr. *Perrault* hath reduc'd the Question to its true Principles, which is the Preference and Superiority of Reason to Prejudice ; and since Mr. *La Motte* hath employ'd against *Homer* that exact and just manner of reasoning, which is so much the Character of the Age, and his own ; in a word, since Philosophy already victorious over *Aristotle's* Reputation, has also carried its Light into *Homer* ; the Eyes of Men begin to be open'd, every one desires to enjoy the Rights and Privileges of his own Reason, or that of a free and fair Examination ; and Prejudice and Prepossession have lost all their Force and Charms ; I shou'd scarce think it worth the while to appear on a Subject so near exhausted, and so far advanc'd, if my Criticism, considering *Homer* in all possible Views, did not give me Occasion to Compose a New System of Poetry of a very extensive Nature, which the Rational and Philosophical Manner in which it is propos'd, and the New Principles on which it is Built and Establish'd, may possibly render as useful and acceptable, as I'm sure 'tis new, and what has not as yet been attempted.

MADAM

MADAM D. was very sensible of this Change and Alteration in the Publick ; for continuing in that haughty and insulting Air, with which she had in several Passages of her last Book mention'd only two or three obscure and inconsiderable Authors, as *Homer's* sole or principal Adversaries, she has now proclaim'd in the very Title Page of her Book, and in the most open Manner, in the publick Advertisements she has caus'd to be scatter'd and dispers'd all over the City, that there was no longer any Person of her Judgment and Opinion ; and that the general Taste of the Age was universally corrupted. I have always heard it said, that nothing was more provoking or unbecoming, that nothing shew'd so much want of Taste and Judgment, or was more against all Decency and Decorum, than to Affront whole Nations : What shall we then say of Madam D. who Affronts her own Nation, under the most Glorious and Auspicious Reign, for the flourishing and Encouragement of all Arts and Sciences, and in the most learn'd and knowing Age that ever was ? Does she think her self capable or qualified thus to Censure and Expose it ; and shan't I think my self able to Vindicate and Defend it,

to do it Justice, and give it its deserv'd Encomium and Praises. I'll only observe, by the by, that the Degeneracy and Diclension of Dramatick Poetry amongst us, since the Prince has carried his Views to greater and nobler Objects, proves nothing as to Taste. There is a great Difference between the Judgment of the Publick, and the Abilites and Talents of particular Authors. Nor does it signify much, to object to us some bad or indifferent Pieces that have had a long and great Run; People go to the Theatre as they do to other publick Spectacles and Entertainment, for the sake often of Company, and the pleasure of Society; so that 'tis very rare, even at the time when they have their greatest Run, and are most throng'd, they are more esteem'd than they deserve.

IN effect, tho' the *French*, as all other Men, are subject and liable to Error and Mistake; yet there is perhaps no Nation, where it is of a shorter Continuance and Duration, or that are sooner undeceived, as to Works and Productions of the Mind, that strike only at first Sight, and that have meerly a shining and plausible Appearance, but void of all real and  
intrin-



intrinsic Worth and Excellence. This is but a Natural and Genuine Effect of the new Philosophy, and its noble Freedom and Impartiality, that had its first Birth and Original amongst us, hath since been so much improved, and so well receiv'd, and is now so universally spread and diffus'd among all Persons of the least Knowledge and Taste: We must not therefore conclude, from the short Continuance that the Reputation of some of our celebrated Writers have had, that they were inferior to many of the Antients, whose Esteem and Character has continu'd longer, and been transmitted, perhaps, with vast Applause, and high Encomiums, down to our own Age. 'Tis not to Time alone, and much less to so short a Period, as what is pass'd since *Balzac* and *Corneille*, that we are to impute or assign, as *Mr. Boileau* does \*, the Discovery of the Faults and Faillings of these two great Authors. *It was immediately perceiv'd*, says he, *that the particular Kind and Manner of Writing, in which Balzac had employ'd his whole Life, was that which he knew the least; I mean the Epistolary one. For tho' his Letters are full of Wit, and many Things there, extreme happily, and admirably well said and express'd; yet we*

\* *Reflett.*  
7. upon  
*Longinus*

every where observe, through all of them, the two Faults and Vices the most contrary and opposite to the just Epistolary Stile and Manner, viz. a false Sublime or Fusian, and Affectation. And pray what hinder'd the Athenians, when Plato's Dialogues first appear'd among them, from observing amongst some excellent Things, the Two Faults and Vices the most contrary and opposite to the Nature of Dialogue, and Conversation, viz. the most unnatural Straining, and Abstraction of Thought, and a constant and perpetual Uniformity of Stile and Expression. *All the Worth and Merit of Corneille's Compositions*, continues Mr. Boileau, \* *having been put by Time, as in a Crucible, is now reduc'd to about Eight or Nine Dramatick Pieces, that continue only to be valu'd and esteem'd; and which are, if I may so say, the Flower and Perfection of his Poetry; and all the rest of his Writings besides, are now justly judg'd and esteem'd, worth little or nothing.* But if the greatest of all our Poets had liv'd in the Time of Sophocles and Euripides, his Works had been transmitted down to us, without any such rigid Censure, or severe Distinction, as this of Modern Criticism: And they wou'd all smoothly have pass'd under the Favour

\* Ibid.

Favour and Protection, and by the Help and Assistance of that general and well-grounded Esteem and Character he had obtain'd from his other surpassingly excellent and inimitable ones. We have already observ'd in this Discourse, that the *Athenians* might easily have discover'd, and been sensible of much worse Faults, and greater Errors and Irregularities, in their own Poets, than any we now find in *Corneille*. The true Crucible and Touchstone then of Authors, and their Works, is a Spirit of free and impartial Reasoning and Enquiry, or a rational Criticism, in a word, 'tis Philosophy; of which we meet with a few Traces and Specimens, in some of the Antients, such as *Cicero* and *Horace*, but of which there never was any general System compos'd, nor any certain Principles settled or fix'd, till last Century. 'Twas hence that *Aristotle's* Reputation and Character was blown up, and o'erthrown, after Two Thousand Years Prepossession and Prescription in his Favour; and that *Homer's* shall shortly run the same Fate, after that of Three Thousand; even as *Ronsard* has already lost his among us, in the Space of about Fifty, and *Balzac* after that of Twenty; and some other of

our



Our Authors, that at first obtain'd a hasty and false Applause, have had their Reputation buried, long before they themselves were Dead.

WE may draw from the short and transient Esteem and Reputation that *Ronsard* possess'd and enjoy'd, and which *Balzac's* false and vicious Manner also at first receiv'd, an Answer to an Objection that is commonly made against our Censures and Criticisms. The Pleasure a Poet gives, and the higher Degree of this he communicates, say they, is the surest and best Sign of the Strength and Superiority of his Genius, his real Worth and Excellence. Now all Ages have been struck with the Charms and Beauties of *Homer's* Poetry, and have own'd he hath communicated to them this Pleasure and Delight in the highest Degree; he has therefore attain'd at least one of the principal Ends and Designs of his Art. Besides, Poetry, generally speaking, being levell to all Mens Capacities, and what they are qualify'd more or less to judge aright of, their unanimous and general Consent, is a much better and stronger Proof, in favour of *Homer*, than meerly the Consent of Philosophers, who are only one Order of Men, and they the fewest in Number, ever was in Favour

your of *Aristotle*. I answer to this, first, That all Men have also been shock'd with many Blemishes and Faults, that abound in the *Iliad*, such as the Indignity of the Character of his Deities, &c. Since all Authors, whether Antient or Modern, that ever spoke of *Homer*, are full either of formal and express Censures and Condemnations, or of strain'd and unnatural Apologies and Vindications of him on this Head. Secondly, suppose *Homer* has really pleas'd, in several other Parts of his Poems, as I don't doubt he has, yet this alone proves nothing; since *Ronsard* and *Balzac*, after having pleas'd a certain Number of Years, have now ceas'd doing so. Thus this inward Sense and Feeling of Delight and Pleasure in reading the Poets, loses all its Pretence and Title to Infallibility; for what is thus granted of one Nation, and one Period of Years, a Philosopher, by an Argument like to what *Horace* uses against the Admiration of the Antients, † may with equal Force and Strength, extend to all *Europe*, and to Thirty Ages, or Three Thousand Years: But without going so far, Is not the same Man very differently affected with the same Work, at different Times and Periods of his Life?

† *Epist. 1.*  
B. 2.

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Our Passions in general, but Admiration more especially, proceeds less from the Quality of the Object, than from the Temper and Disposition we are actually in. There is nothing then certain or infallible in this, or in any other Case, nor indeed in any Thing else under the Sun, besides Reason alone; and 'tis to it we must submit; even this our inward Feeling, and Sense of Delight and Pleasure, we find in Reading any Author, whether Antient or Modern: Poets and Orators, for Example, have Nature for their great Object, to Draw and Paint, and to convince and effectually engage and perswade the Mind of Man, is their chief End and Design. Those therefore, who chuse the brightest and strongest Images, most effectual, and the best adapted to this Purpose, who best express what is necessary, and avoid what is superfluous, will certainly speak and write the best, and will even insensibly improve and reform the Taste of their Hearers and Readers, if vitiated, and the Age in which they Live. 'Tis by this Rule we now justly condemn the *Gothick* Manner and Stile that pleas'd for a certain Time; and the *Eastern* one that still pleases, in some Nations and Countries; because



because neither of them are conform nor agreeable to that general and natural Idea and Notion, we have here given of Poetry and Eloquence. And after all, 'twill still be found, when Things are plac'd in a just and clear Light, that our Taste and Feeling on this Occasion, instead of losing, will gain considerably, and be only more agreeably, more constantly, and more certainly and powerfully stirr'd up and excited hereby.

I own, that Philosophy, which is only a Light in the Mind, simply consider'd, will not of it self furnish us with those shining and bright Compositions that are the fruit and effects of a strong and beautiful Imagination. I own further, that this Imagination and these happy Talents first shone and broke out with the greatest Lustre among the *Greeks*, before they appear'd to such Advantage in any other People or Nation: But we must not ascribe the Cause of this to their *Eastern Sun*, according to the New System Madam D. proposes to the *French*, that free-thinking and Philosophical Nation, that has now been accusom'd a long time to refer all things only to their just and proper Principles, and their true Source and Original.

\* In her  
Causes of  
Cor. p. 18.

Original. She begs us to believe \* as if we were very much dispos'd to receive her Vain and Precarious Hypotheses and Suppositions, even when they tend to our Disgrace and Reproach; *that as Men can never know any thing but what they have either discover'd of themselves or learn'd from others; there are Nations so happily situated, and that the Sun sheds such favourable Influences upon, that they are capable not only of inventing particular Arts and Sciences, but also of carrying them to perfection at the same time.* I always thought that the Qualities of Men deduc'd from the Countries where they were born, were only so many popular Proverbs, that admitted as many Exceptions almost, as there are Persons; and I still thought, that this manner of judging was never us'd, by any that knew the World, or were acquainted with Human Nature. I'm perswaded that the Difference of Climates don't touch or affect what is most real or essential in Wit and Genius, which is still Individual and Personal. 'Tis commonly said, for Instance, that the *Gascoons* are Witty and Lively in their Repartees, that the *Provincials* are born Poets; but I think I have observ'd, that the *Gascoons*, if they are only *Gascons*,

*Gascoons*, and not Persons of Wit at the same time, have no other Vivacity, than what merely flows and arises from their particular Pronunciation and Manner of Accent. Hence it comes to pass, that those who repeat their Repartees, never fail imitating and counterfeiting this their Accent; which always therefore become Cold and Insipid, when ever committed to Writing. We have abundant Proof of this in the *Vasconiana*, which contains a great Number of Witty and Smart Sayings and Apophthegms that were made at *Paris* or elsewhere, to represent the Humour and Genius of the *Gascoons*. As for the Inhabitants of *Provence*, who are said to be born Poets; this Fancy and Opinion hath, I believe, no other Foundation than what arose from the History of the *Trouvadours*, or *Provincial Poets*; tho' this Fact, when rightly stated, no more proves Poetry to be natural to *Provence* than any other Country. The Counts or Earls of *Provence* for during two Centuries, or from *Remond Berenger*, Father of *Margaret*, Wife of *St. Lewis*, to *Jane* the First Queen of *Sicily* and *Naples*, having very much favour'd and encourag'd Poetry, there arose a great Number of those Poets, who also immediately disappear'd and  
vanish'd



vanish'd as soon as this Protection and Favour was withdrawn. But besides, under the Name of *Trouvadors* or *Provincial Poets*, were then comprehended the Poets of all other Counties and Provinces of *France*, nay, indeed of all or most other Countries of *Europe*. *Girard of Bourneville* for Instance, a *Limosin Gentleman* is call'd the Master in the Provincial Poets, in the Year 1278. *Richard Cœur-de-Lyon King of England*, and *Savory of Mauleon*, who was also an *Englishman*, are said to have wrote Provincial Poems, because this was then the general Poetical Dialect and Language of that Time and Age. But since our Poetry has at all been improv'd, we have not had so much as one Poet, from that Country. 'Twas not from thence there arose a *Malherbe*, or *Corneille*, a *Racine*, or *Moliere*, a *Boileau*, or *Fontain*, or a *Mr. La Motte*; in a word, if Climates have any Influence upon Men's Minds and Genius, it is only upon their Temper and Humour; and what is more, I dare affirm, that what one thus derives from their Country, is rather some Vice and Imperfection of the Soil and Territory, than any good Quality; and 'tis to this, therefore in a good measure I would ascribe the Lightness

ness and Inconstancy of the *Greek* Genius and Temper. But it will be said, that Learning has flourish'd more in certain Climates than others: I own it; but without searching for the Reasons of this in the Degrees of Longitude and Latitude, we must deduce them from the obvious and natural State and Circumstances of Things, whether in Monarchies or Republicks. The Situation and Posture of Affairs in some Commonwealths, and the Favour of Princes in other Kingdoms and Monarchies, has caus'd those great and happy Talents, of which Nature hath laid the Seeds in some few Men, in all Countries and in all Ages, to break out with an uncommon Lustre, shine and flourish. And these Talents thus unfolded and disclos'd, are afterwards heightned and improv'd by a mutual Emulation, and by the Light that naturally flows and arises from the mutual Society and Communication of Learned and Ingenious Men one with another: 'Tis for the same Reason that some Ages are more favourable to Learning than others, Mens Minds being better dispos'd and prepar'd, and the Language in which they write more cultivated and improv'd. The Study, for Example, that was made of the Ancients from the

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Time of *Francis* the 1st, to *Henry* the IVth, had undoubtedly contributed not a little to polish Mens Minds, and refine their Taste; but all the Magnificence and Generosity of *Francis* the 1st to Men of Letters, cou'd not produce a *Racine*, such as the last Age produc'd and enjoy'd.

THESE and such like Principles will give us the true Causes of the Corruption of Taste. Long Wars, and the Miseries and Misfortunes necessarily attending them, do a visible Prejudice to Learning, and often give it a fatal Stop and Interruption. But besides a universal Corruption and Dissolution of Manners, that flows immediately from Princes to Subjects; the Tyranny and Oppression of the one, the Dissolution and Licentiousness of the other; in a word, whatever alters or disturbs the Publick Peace and Tranquility, and breaks in upon general Order and Decency, ruins and corrupts Taste. This was the principal and original Source and Cause of the Decay and Degeneracy of the *Romans* soon after *Augustus's* Age. 'Tis such Reasons as these, more fully unfolded, more narrowly and deeply enquir'd into and pursu'd, and more particularly and clearly deduc'd and explain'd; and not such as  
are



are taken from the Sun and Stars, that will satisfy rational and inquisitive Persons: And 'tis thus that true Philosophy, which still applies it self chiefly to the Study and Knowledge of the Mind and Soul, looking upon this not only as the best and most considerable Branch of Human Knowledge, but as the Foundation and Key of all other Science, far from neglecting Learning or Erudition, makes, on the contrary, the most Noble and Valuable Use hereof.

THO' Philosophy, as we before observ'd, simply consider'd, is only a Light of the Mind, causing it to judge justly and rationally of Things; yet it has produc'd an infinite Number of the most Excellent and Valuable Performances: What might not I here say of Natural Philosophy and Physick, that only existed nominally, till this reduc'd it to its just and proper Principles, viz. the Powers of Mechanism, and the Laws of Motion? I know some few Persons, who may be said to be of our Age, without living in it, or at all knowing it, being ignorant of the Glory that the *French* and other Nations in this and the last Century have acquired, by the Noble Discoveries, the great Progress and Improvement they have made in the Study

\* Preface  
of Mr. D.  
to his Ho-  
race,  
p. 105.

of Nature; and who believe therefore that all our best and greatest Discoveries were made before *Rapbael's Age* \*, confining them to the Invention of Printing and Gunpowder; I know that these Persons persist obstinately to deny the Moderns the Glory of the Restoration and Improvement of Natural Philosophy; but in this Science, as in all the rest, would give the Honour to the Ancients. Mr. D. for Example, thus begins his Preface to *Hippocrates the Egyptians*, (that People and Nation that were the Original Authors of all the Fopperies and Trumpery, Errors and Superstition, and the most enormous Absurdities in Religion as well as History, and that were an Enemy to all new Discoveries.) *The Egyptians us'd to say of the Greeks, That they were always Children, and that they had no Science among them that deserv'd the Name of Ancient Knowledge or Learning: We may still say the same, and with much more Reason, of such who neglecting the Ancient Methods and Rules of Arts and Sciences, and beating out new and untrodden Paths, still retain and confine those Arts to a State of Infancy, wherein they also continue themselves. The only means to remedy this Misfortune,*

*is to restore again those Ancient Rules, and diligently to mark and observe the Progress that every Art hath made since its first Invention and Original.* Nothing indeed is more useful, than exactly and historically to observe the gradual Progress of Arts and Sciences; and in this respect the Ancient Observations may be equally useful, as the Modern. But it is so far from being true, that in Natural Philosophy, of which Mr. D. is here speaking, we must keep or retain the old Rules; that 'twas only to a total superceeding of them, and laying them aside, and the introducing others in their room and stead, that all the late Improvements that have been made in Natural Philosophy are due and owing. 'Tis true, that Experiments which require a long Tract of Time, have contributed to this its Perfection and Improvement, as Mr. D. has since been pleas'd to own, in yielding us on this Head some Advantage over the Ancients \*. But these Experiments themselves are wholly owing to the new Principles that have been introduc'd; by which all the Phænomena and Mysteries of Nature have been demonstrated only to depend on the single Law of Gravity, in Conjunction with the Powers of Mechanism, and Laws of Motion. But pray

\* *In his  
new Pref.  
to Horace,  
p. 101.*



what Experiments cou'd, for Instance, ever be made on *Pythagoras's* Numbers, or *Plato's* Ideas, or *Aristotle's* Privations, Formalities and Abstractions, when these and such as these were the generally receiv'd Principles of Natural Philosophy? Philosophers now, are so far from subjecting themselves to the Ancient Rules, that they don't submit to the Modern, without full Proof and Examination; and the *Cartesians* themselves, have relinquish'd and abandon'd *Cartes* in a vast many Particulars. In a word, there is nothing absolutely certain and immutable, but only this Principle of Philosophy, to refer all to a full and impartial Enquiry and Examination. The Famous Historian of the Academy of Sciences observes, 'twas upon this Principle that this Illustrious Society, whom Mr. D. may safely trust in those Matters, wou'd not admit of *any general System*, for fear of falling into the Inconvenience of too hasty and precipitate Resolutions and Conclusions, which being once establish'd, still oppose all succeeding Truths and Discoveries, that might either appear, or were really inconsistent with them \*. Even in particular Subjects, tho' nothing shews a greater Capacity or larger Extent of Genius, than this

\* Pref. to  
the Hist.  
and Memoirs of the  
Acad. of  
Sciences.

this Talent of Systems; yet the greatest Strength of Judgment, the truest Superiority of Mind and Genius, the highest Improvement and Exaltation of Human Reason, is when a Person can even rise above his own System, and entertain a secret Diffidence and Suspicion of it, as well as all others.

BUT new Discoveries in Nature, and the most Excellent Books and Treatises containing them, without any other Advantages or Ornaments than the being compos'd in the most regular and exact Method, and wrote with the utmost Clearness and Perspicuity, is not all we owe to the new Philosophy. To it are also due a vast Number of other Noble Works, and Excellent Productions of the Mind, where to all the natural Beauties of Composition and Style, to all the Ornaments and Graces of a simple, easy, and natural, but a noble and sublime Eloquence, are also added the most refin'd and exalted Ideas and Notions, together with the profoundest Theories and Speculations. Here the *Search after Truth* naturally offers it self: And without entring into the Merits of the Performance, which don't now fall under our Consideration, and only considering its Manner and Turn, or the

Art and Skill that shines in its Composition throughout, to compare it with *Plato's* Celebrated *Timæus*, were only to compare Light with Darkness. Since the more one endeavours to apprehend and enter into *Plato's* Thoughts and Reasonings, the less we are able to know or discover them; for as he has chose all his Terms and Expressions only in Allusion to Musick and Harmony, as soon as one, tho' with the utmost Intention of Mind, fixes a certain and determin'd Sense to any of his Sentences and Propositions, we are immediately lost again, by finding some others that destroys the Idea and Notion we had before affix'd to it; so that we are reduc'd either to a blind and implicit, and consequently stupid Admiration, or else to an express and profess'd Contempt of him. On the contrary, the most sublime and metaphysical Theories and Reasoning of the Author of the *Search after Truth* being still founded upon Hypotheses & Suppositions, that are themselves grounded upon Principles of an Eternal Truth; and being always wrote, not only in the most regular and exact manner, but also with the utmost Perspicuity and Elegance, require only a due Degree of Attention to apprehend and understand the Author's Meaning, in whatever he proposes and advances either



either in this, or any other of his Books and Writings. What might not there be said of the Graces and Beauties, those exquisite and inimitable Graces with which the System of *Des Cartes* has been illustrated and adorn'd by the Immortal Pens, either of those that have commented and explain'd it, as the Author of the Dialogues and Conversations of the Plurality of Worlds; or of those who by the Privilege the same Philosophy allows its Disciples and greatest Admirers, have overturn'd and confuted it; such as the Learned and Ingenious F. *Daniell*, Author of the Voyage to the World of *Des Cartes*.

NOR is the Use of our Philosophy solely confin'd to the Works of Nature, but every other Subject and Art have reap'd Advantage and Improvement from it; the Pulpit, the Bar, Poetry it self. Indeed nothing is of so large and universal Extent, or hath a more general Influence over all Sorts of Knowledge and Learning, as the prevailing and reigning Philosophy: This was true of the Ancient, and is much more so of the Modern. Philosophy is like that general Spirit that is spread and diffused through the Air, which all Men breathe in, and partake of more or less, without being sensible of, or per-

perceiving it: But whereas the Principles of the Ancient Systems only mutually ruin'd and destroy'd one another, the general Principle of the Modern Philosophy, that submits every thing to the free and impartial Discussion and Examination of Reason, will remain and subsist for ever, is of an eternal Continuance and Duration. I draw hence an Observation and Reflection of some Moment and Importance. Mr. D. in his Preface to *Horace* \* tells us, That Modern Emulation *can only fill our Writers with Ignorance and Presumption, or at best furnish out a Set of very sorry and indifferent Authors, who may possibly, if I may so express it, steal into Reputation, but who can never obtain it, but through the Error and Ignorance of Men; and that even this, such as it is, will be extremely limited and confin'd, and of very short Continuance and Duration.* M. D. † in much of the same Strain and Manner, assures us, *That she don't know by what Fate it was; but so it is, that in all Ages the writing against Homer hath hitherto prov'd fatal to the Character and Reputation of all such as durst attempt it.* In answer to this, we might take the Liberty to tell Mr. and Madam D. That they having confin'd themselves for the Good of the Publick merely to the Rank

\* P. 110.

† In her Causes of Corrupt. of Taste, p. 14.

Rank and Class of Translators and Commentators, which was never esteem'd the first or principal Order in the Republick of Letters, but rather the most inferior of all; it does not belong to them to pass a general Judgment and Censure upon other Writers, and least of all to decide or determine concerning the Reputation and Character of Original Authors: But I believe I had best return them a certain Advice and Caution, for their kind Caveat and Admonition on this Occasion. I must therefore tell them, That since the Restoration of Learning, that happen'd in the last Age without Mr. and Madam D. seeming to have observ'd, or taken much notice of it; no other Critical Writers will ever for the future be esteem'd, but only such in whom there appears a Taste for just and exact Reasoning, a sincere Love of Truth, and an equal and impartial Judgment and discerning of whatever is good or bad in all the different Kinds of Writing they particularly converse with, and bestow their Pains and Labours upon: But as for those who only argue from Testimonies and Authority, and who use and employ their Gifts and Talents in Reasoning, to find bright and shining Beauties in the plainest and most obvious Errors and Mistakes,  
great



great and deep Mysteries even in the grossest and most palpable Faults and Absurdities of the Ancients, they will soon fall into a perfect Contempt and Oblivion, and be for ever neglected and forgot, or else only held and esteem'd as Authors of the same Rank and Order in the *Belles Lettres*, and Philological Learning, as *Arriaga* or *Oviedo*, *Gellidius* and the *Professores Conimbricenses* are already in the Philosophical.

I FIND it is no easy Matter for us to overcome the Prejudices of Education, and to embrace and relish other Principles and Opinions than what we at first receiv'd and were taught. Mr. *Boileau*, for Instance, easily and without much Difficulty espous'd the Cause of the Modern Physicks against that of the Ancients. Yea, he even lent his own Help and Assistance to run down *Aristotle*, and to rally and expose his Philosophy, whose Authority he tells us, in his Judgment of *Parnassus* \*, had acquir'd a Right of Prescription against Reason and Experience. Whence came it then, that he opposed the Proposal was afterwards made him of Criticizing and Examining *Homer* in the same manner, as *Aristotle* had been, and on the same Principles? Whence came it that after such a Conclusion and Assertion as that above, he

shou'd

\* *Ref.* 7.

shou'd tell us \*, *That when Writers had* \* Ibid.

*been admir'd for a great Number of Ages, 'twas Folly any longer to doubt of the Merit of such Authors; and that if we did not see the Perfections and Beauties of their Compositions and Writings, we must not therefore conclude they were not there, but that only we our selves were blind?* The Reason was this; Mr. Boileau, when he came into the World, found the Modern Physicks already generally receiv'd and establish'd; but he was Old before they began to apply the same Light of Philosophy, or just and exact Reasoning to the *Belles Lettres*, Criticism and Philology.

Thus he rather chose to be known and distinguish'd by the whimsical and ridiculous Name and Title of the *Homerical Boileau* †, than accept of a new Light that presented it self to him too late. He thought to triumph over, and insult his Adversaries by the poor and mean Epithet he gave himself of the passionate Admirer of the Ancients ||.

† Letter to Mr. Per-  
rault.

|| Ibid.

The Reputation of *Homer* having begun in a very dark and ignorant Age, all succeeding Writers have said and acted one after another, just as *Boileau* here does. *We are passionate Admirers of Homer*; but the Difference between him and them is, that they acted thus, during Ages, wholly subject to the Power and Dominion of Prepossession

possession and Prejudice ; and when there had not as yet any Instance been given of an Object of Ancient Esteem and Admiration, that had fallen through the mere Force and Power of a just and rational Criticism, and by the mere Dint and Strength of strict and exact Reasoning ; whereas *Boileau* himself had contributed to the Ruin and Overthrow of that of *Aristotle's*.

WE must also own, that the Knowledge and Taste of Geometry, that most of the passionate and excessive Admirers of the Ancients, have wanted ; but which has been very much study'd and improv'd in this and the last Age, has now much accustom'd Mens Minds to enter into the first Principles and Original Notions and Reasons of things, and to admit nothing but what is incontestably clear and evident. We sometimes quote great Geometers in our Mathematical Books and Writings, and quote them with Honour and Applause ; but it is only to refer to their Illustrations or Demonstrations, but never to impose upon the Reader by their Names and Authority. Mathematicians never tell us, We must not examine a Proposition in Geometry after *Archimedes*, or Sir *Isaac Newton*. 'Tis this Spirit of exact and impartial Enquiry and Examination, Madam



Madam D. would exclude from a Criticism upon *Homer*, and not without Reason. Geometry seems to have prov'd but unfortunate and fatal to that Poet in all Ages; and the two most considerable and learned Adversaries and Criticks of his, that are left us among the Ancients, *viz.* *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, were both Geometers. It is in this Sense she has Reason enough to say, and may indeed justly exclaim, What a Plague and Judgment, not for Poetry, but *Homer*, is a Geometer? I ought, however, to thank Madam D. for the Honour she has done me in stiling me one; for tho' the Place and Station I have the Honour to fill in the Royal Academy, supposes me to understand, and even obliges me to illustrate and explain, whatever Discoveries the greatest Mathematicians in *Europe* make in all Parts of the Mathematicks; yet for all this, I am no more a Geometer than a Poet; since I pretend to new Discoveries, either in the one or the other. But if Madam D. has done me this Honour, she has done her self no less Injury, in delivering it as her real Judgment and Opinion, that a Geometer was incapable of writing justly concerning *Homer*; especially doing this in so absurd and ridiculous  
a man-

a manner, as by attempting to rally and ridicule the principal and most considerable Branch of Human Knowledge, if not the only one that deserves the Name and Title: Shou'd such a weak Censure and Reflection ever flow'd from the Pen, or appear'd in the Writings of a Lady, that held any Rank or Order, or made the least Figure in the Republick of Letters. She had certainly forgot the manner in which Mr. *Dodard* \*, one of the great Lights of the Academy of Sciences, refuted, and so justly, tho' severely, reprimanded Mr. *D.* her Husband, when he also would have rally'd those who apply themselves to physical Experiments. Mr. and Madam *D.* may be allow'd to be ignorant of what they please; every one studies what they most affect, and what their own Genius principally leads and inclines them to; and they have even distinguish'd themselves in that Part of Learning they have chose: But it is not allow'd, it ought not to be permitted or suffer'd any to despise or ridicule what they don't understand, and are wholly ignorant of. Besides, the deepest and profoundest Men in all Parts of Learning have study'd Geometry; and we may also add, that all the greatest Scholars and most  
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\* *Men. of  
the Acc. of  
Sciences,*  
1700.  
p. 281.

considerable Authors, and such as were ever esteem'd of the first Rank and Order in the Commonwealth of Letters, have known it; as *Empedocles*, *Aristotle*, *Eratosthenes* among the *Greeks*; *Varro* and *Nigidius* among the *Romans*; and in the last Age, *Joseph Scaliger* and *F. Petavius*; if we wou'd mention those of the *French Academy*, the late *Mr. Meziriac*, and the illustrious *Mr. Huet* Bishop of *Auranches*, still living. I might also produce Mathematicians and Geometers of the first rate, who have excell'd in, and very much cultivated and improv'd all polite Learning; such as *Mr. Fermat*, *Mr. Bouillaud*, *Dr. Barrow*, *Dr. Wallis*, *Mr. Leibnitz*, *Dr. Halley*. But since we are here chiefly concern'd with Poetry, I rather chuse to instance Geometers as have perfectly succeeded this way, whether in writing in the Dead or Living Languages, as *Fracaſtor*, *Frifchlin*, and *Mr. Huet*, for their *Latin Poetry*; *Mr. Malezieu*, and *Fontenelle*, for their Superiority and Excellence in the *French*. I omit mentioning; that there are ſeveral Parts of Learning not to be underſtood without Geometry, as Chronology, for Inſtance, without Astronomy; ſince it may be of more

H

Impor-



Importance here to observe, that there is this Difference between it and other Sciences, that whereas these are shut up within certain Limits and Bounds; Geometry, on the contrary, communicates to the Mind of such as study it, a certain Justness and Regularity that extends it self universally to every thing else: This Justness and Exactness of Mind consider'd as a natural Disposition and Habit, such as when traced to its first Source and Principle it really is, is an Advantage and Talent, that indeed those as are most void of it are often apt to assume and arrogate: But the Study of Geometry implying a peculiar Sense and Love of Truth, in such as in earnest apply themselves to it; and by the general Consent of all proper Judges, this natural Temper and Disposition of Mind to judge truly of Things, being much strengthen'd and improv'd by the Help and Assistance of Geometry, it must certainly give in all Subjects, where Reasoning is concern'd, a real and uncontested Advantage and Superiority to one that has study'd it, above him that hath not. *Pythagoras* thought so, since he caus'd to be inscrib'd over the Door of his Academy, Οὐδὲς ἀγεωμέτρητος εἰσέλτω, *Let none, ignorant of Geometry, enter here;* tho' indeed he made Morality more the Business

Business of his School and Academy, than either Mathematicks, or any other Part of Learning. Plato, to whom some have ascrib'd the former Sentence, has explain'd himself more at large in the 7th Book of his Rep. Those, says he, who are born with a Mathematical Genius \*, have usually a better Capacity than others, for all manner of Learning. And even those who are naturally dull, if they don't acquire by this Study a greater Capacity for other Parts of Learning, will at least gain thus much, viz. better Sense, and a stronger Judgment than they had before, or ever cou'd have had without this Study. And a little lower, having said that the Citizens of his Commonwealth shou'd not despise Geometry, he adds, that it hath some remote and distant, but general Influences and Advantages upon the Minds of Men, *παραγὰ, ultra ipsius propositum* †, that are very considerable, and which have a happy Effect upon all other Sciences, and Parts of Learning; and this to that degree, 'tis Plato who still speaks, that we may soon perceive a vast Difference between one that has study'd Geometry, and another who is ignorant of it. If Plato express'd himself thus at a Time when Geometry was so

\* *Αριθμητικοί*,  
Arithmetici. Mar-  
cil. Fic.

† Ibid.

imperfect, and as yet but in its first Beginnings and Infancy; what mayn't we now say, that 'tis carry'd to so great a Height? In effect, Geometry was always useful, to render the Mind regular, just and attentive, in all its Searches and Enquiries; and especially to inspire it with a Sense and Love of Truth: But it hath acquir'd, in the Hands of the Moderns, and from their Improvements, two other Qualities that renders it still more profitable and advantageous to the Mind, and infinitely superior to that of the Ancients, *viz.* an absolute and perfect Connection and Harmony in all its Parts, and an infinite Universality and Extent in all its Resolutions. The first of those imprints upon the Minds of those who study it, a Habit of Order and Regularity, that cou'd not be acquir'd from the Ancient Geometry, which was never reduc'd into one System or Body; and that, excepting the first Elements, in which there is neither much Pleasure nor Profit, was only compos'd of separate and independent Propositions without any certain Union and Connection. But besides, our Geometry is now become also infinite; and this not only by the perpetual Use it makes of infinite Quantities in its Calculations, but al-



so by the infinite Number of Cases included in each of its Solutions, which are now become all general and universal ; so that those who are ignorant of this Science, indeed know very little, or nothing, of the great Reach, vast Depth and Force, or mighty Extent of the Powers and Faculties of a Human Mind: But there is a Third Property or Quality of the new Geometry, which may more effectually induce young People to its Study than all the rest, and that has even already engag'd several Ladies themselves; which is, its extreme Easiness and Facility. Geometry, tho' formally of so small an Extent, comparatively speaking, so limited and confin'd, yet wearied and fatigued our greatest Genius's, and strongest Heads; whereas the New, tho' universal and infinite in its Extent, not only improves and strengthens, but also, by its natural Simplicity and Facility, refreshes and recreates the Powers and Faculties of the Mind.

I DON'T approve those Authors, who in Works of Morality and Religion, or Criticism, and the *Belles Lettres*, affect to write in a Geometrical Method, as Madam D. believ'd I wou'd do in this Treatise, 'Tis certainly a very bad  
Taste

Taste in Composition, to proceed by Theorems, Lemmata, and Problems, upon Subjects that are not Geometrical; and indeed such as do so, taking commonly for Axioms doubtful and obscure, or Metaphysical Propositions, or some other perhaps that may be true in a large and general, but false in a more narrow and particular Sense, are often guilty of one continued Parallogism, from Beginning to the End of their Work; and take care to manage it so, that the best Method for the Discovery and finding of Truth, necessarily leads and effectually engages them into Error. 'Tis the Soul and Spirit, and not the dry Geometrical Form and Method we ought to introduce into our Books and Writings.

HERE were the proper Place to give the general Scheme and Plan of the following Work; but it beginning with an Introduction, that will fully satisfy the Reader's Curiosity on this Head, there remains nothing further to say, but only to desire him to take notice, that my First Volume being printed off before I saw M. D.'s Treatise of the Causes of the *Corruption of Taste*, 'twas for this Reason I make no mention of it; but I do in my Second, tho'

tho' but in a few Places; because I attacking *Homer* from Principles of Reason, and Madam *D.* defending him only from Authorities, we seldom meet, or in reality much oppose one another. Besides, her last Book being only a Repetition of the Remarks she had already printed upon the *Iliad*; and whereas, instead of adding any new Beauty and Force to them, she has only contracted and abridg'd them, by which means they seem to have lost much of both; I chose to attack them rather, as they occur in her first Work, where they appear to more Advantage, and with greater Strength and Lustre.

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F I N I S.



and with a strong sense of the  
value of the human soul, and  
the duty of the Christian to  
reach the lost, he has written  
this book, which is a most  
valuable and interesting  
contribution to the literature  
of the subject.

69  
A LETTER from Mr. Rosel Ba-  
mon, Counsellor of the Court  
and Embassies of the King of  
*Prussia*, to the Author of the  
*Critical History of the Republick of  
Letters*. Containing a Judg-  
ment and Character of *Abbè  
Terracon's Critical Dissertation* upon  
*Homer's Iliad*. Translated from  
*Tome 11th of Histoire Critique, &c.*

S I R,

“ AFTER thanking you for the Honour  
“ of your Remembrance, and your  
“ Goodness in inserting any Dissertations  
“ of mine in your Learned and Curious  
“ *Journal*, I desire the Favour, if you please,  
“ to publish in your next Volume what follows:  
“ Mr. *Abbe Terracon's* Book, which I have  
“ just now perus'd, is indeed an Excellent  
“ Piece of Criticism. If the Author had  
“ only been a great Geometer, I doubt he  
“ cou'd never have publish'd so finish'd a  
“ Work, as this he has oblig'd us with, rela-  
“ ting to the *Controversy* now depend-  
“ ing about *Homer*; and in general, con-  
“ cerning the Merit of Ancient and Mo-  
“ dern Authors. To succeed in so great  
“ a Design as this, 'twas necessary to  
“ join to the Quality of a Geometer and  
“ Philo-

"Philosopher, an Excellent Taste, a vast  
"Fund of *Erudition*, and also to enter in-  
"to so profound a Discussion of several Parts  
"of Learning, as but few Persons are capa-  
"ble of.

"But there is nothing that has so much  
"charm'd me in his Book, as that Equity  
"and Impartiality he shews to the Ancients,  
"to whom he ascribes all the Merit and Re-  
"putation they justly deserve.

"This Learned Abbot's Criticism attacks,  
"properly speaking, but a small Number of  
"the Admirers of the Ancients. Most of  
"those who speak with Esteem of them,  
"and find in their Books Beauties that  
"perhaps had still lain conceal'd, and  
"been undiscover'd, had they not reach'd  
"our own Times, have confin'd their Ad-  
"miration for the *Iliad* of *Horner*, for In-  
"stance, to the Sweetness and Harmony of  
"its Verse ; to the natural and simple Turn  
"of the Stile ; lastly, to the Advantage this  
"Poet had to be, as 'twere, an Original Au-  
"thor, and draw out of his own Fund all  
"those Treasures, which furnish'd *Aristotle*  
"with all the several Parts of his Poetical  
"System.

"If all the Rules, which this System con-  
"tains, are not so just and sure, as was once  
"thought and imagin'd, the Work still de-  
"serves to be esteem'd ; and so much the  
"more, as he had no *prior* Model to fol-  
"low or copy after. The Bulk of *Ho-*  
"mer's Friends and Admirers never believ'd  
"that



“ that Epic Poetry, which ow'd its first  
“ Birth and Original to him, then also re-  
“ ceiv'd its last Finishing and Perfection;  
“ they were content to affirm, That it was no  
“ small Glory for him, to have been the first  
“ Inventor of this Manner of Writing; and  
“ excus'd several Things that now justly  
“ shock us in the *Iliad*, upon the account of  
“ the Rudeness and Simplicity of the Ancient  
“ Manners and Customs of the Age he liv'd  
“ in.

“ 'Tis true, that in *France* and *England*,  
“ and perhaps elsewhere, there were found  
“ some Celebrated Moderns of profound  
“ Learning, whose Admiration for *Homer*  
“ went further. These last maintain'd,  
“ that *Homer* had attain'd such a Degree of  
“ Perfection, as those that first attempt this  
“ Sort of Writing can never reach.

“ One is at a loss to comprehend, how  
“ Persons of their Knowledge and Sense  
“ cou'd have carried Prejudice so far, or suf-  
“ fer it to have had so much the Ascendant  
“ over them. Some indiscreet and too zea-  
“ lous Admirers and Defenders of the Mo-  
“ derns, might possibly, by treating the *An-*  
“ *cients* with too much Contempt, partly con-  
“ tribute to this Excess of Prejudice in them;  
“ We know very well what are the Conse-  
“ quences of warm Disputes; when we are  
“ angry, and think we have just Reason to  
“ complain of the Injustice done an Author,  
“ there is nothing so common, as in Vindi-  
“ cating

"cating him, to ascribe more Perfections and  
"Beauties to him, than else, had we been in  
"a cooler Temper, we shou'd ever have al-  
"low'd him.

"The Reading of the most Beautiful and  
"Witty Compositions of the Moderns, gives,  
"tis true, a great Idea and Notion of the  
"Ancients. We discover, that the first are  
"are very much indebted to the last, and  
"often, what they have most touching and  
"affecting, is only borrow'd from them:  
"But we must be blind, if we don't also  
"perceive certain Beauties peculiar to them,  
"wanting in the other. And what more  
"needs there, to prevent our becoming  
"blind and excessive Admirers, either of the  
"one or of the other?

"As for *Abbe Terracon*, he does the Greek  
"and Roman Orators and Historians Justice.  
"If he gives any Advantage for *Lyrick* Poe-  
"try to Mr. *La Motte* above *Horace*, 'tis on-  
"ly with respect to Morality. He has op-  
"pos'd no Epick Poem to *Virgil's Aeneids*.  
"We have also Reason to think, that if he  
"had had Occasion to mention his *Georgicks*,  
"a Work which, in the Opinion of the most  
"Learned, excels the *Aeneids*, he wou'd have  
"spoke of it with great Advantage. Lastly,  
"there appears neither Party nor Passion in  
"his Criticism. He explains himself in a  
"clear and elegant Manner, supports what  
"he says with strong and solid Reasoning.  
"This is all that can be desired. Those who  
"are exempt from Prejudice, can expect no  
"more.

“ more. What Compass of Knowledge, and  
“ Extent of Genius, does he give to *Virgil*?  
“ And to do this Author Justice, is there  
“ any whose Glory approaches his? Since  
“ the Days of *Augustus*, to our own, no Per-  
“ formance has yet equall'd that of the *Æ-*  
“ *neids*. Yet those are inferior to the *Geor-*  
“ *gicks*, in the Opinion of the greatest Judges.  
“ What I have here said of Prejudice,  
“ calls to my Mind two Observations I think  
“ it not amiss to communicate to you. Mr.  
“ *Boileau*, in his Critical Reflexions upon  
“ *Longinus*, N. 8. after having given a short  
“ Abstract of the first Ode of *Pindar*, ob-  
“ serves that this Passage in the Ode, the  
“ *vast Wilds or Desarts of Heaven, when Day*  
“ *begins*, is perhaps one of the greatest and  
“ sublimest Expressions we meet with in  
“ Poetry. Yet 'tis certain, that none of the  
“ Ancients, nor *Pindar* himself, ever believ'd  
“ that this Passage contain'd any thing extra-  
“ ordinary in it. The Ancients, and espe-  
“ cially the Poets, when speaking of the  
“ Stars accommodating themselves to the  
“ common and vulgar Ideas, could not find  
“ in this Passage of *Pindar* that *wonderful and*  
“ *sublime*, which *Boileau* first discover'd. They,  
“ especially the grosser Vulgar, imagin'd  
“ that the *Night* sow'd and, as it were, strew'd  
“ the Heavens with Stars, & that when it went  
“ off, it carried them along with its Shades back  
“ again into the Ocean; or else that the Sun,  
“ beginning its Course, chac'd and expell'd  
“ them thence. 'Tis thus *Horace*, in his 5th  
“ Sat. B. I. O. 9. says, in a pleasant manner,  
“ --- Jam



— *Jam Nox inducere terris  
Umbras, & Cælo diffundere Signa parabat.*

“And Ode 21. Book 3. at the End, he expresses himself thus :

*Dum rediens fugat Astra Phæbus.*

“Virgil expresses himself in the same manner, in several Places.

— *Etiam Nox humida Cælo  
Præcipitat, suadentque cadentia Sidera Somnos.*

“Pindar having then, conform to this Vulgar Error, said in his Ode, that when Day broke, the Heavens became desert, or were abandon'd; he only spoke, as the common People were us'd to express themselves, at the Time he wrote: And never either aim'd or pretended to that Sublime, Mr. Boileau here ascribes to him.

“F. Bouhours, in his *Art de bien penser*, Dial. 2. P. 79. of the *Amsterd.* Edit. compares the following Passage of Horace, Ode 4. B. 1.

*Pallida Mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum Tabernas  
Regumque Turres,*

With this Stanza of Malherbe,

*Le pauvre en sa cabane, où le chaume le couvre,  
Est sujet à ses Loix ;*

*Et La Garde, qui veille aux barrieres du Louvre,  
N'en Defend pas nos Rois.*

" He finds in the *Latin* Poet a more Noble  
" Figure, and a bolder Turn; but that of  
" the *French* more natural and fine: He adds,  
" that both are very Noble and Sublime.

" *Abbe Pellegrin*, in the Preface prefix'd to  
" his Excellent Translation of *Horace's* Odes,  
" also compares this Passage with *Malherb's*  
" Stanza, and declares in Favour of the *La-*  
" *tin* Poet; and thinks, that with respect to  
" the Great and Sublime, the *Roman* has  
" the Advantage over the *French* one; yet I  
" dare be positive, that *Horace*, in expres-  
" sing himself thus, never design'd any thing  
" of that Sublime our two Authors find  
" in him.

" In the 19th Ode of his 2d Book, this  
" Poet tells us, that *Penthea* was cut in Pieces  
" by *Agave* her Mother, *Ino* and *Antinoe* her  
" Aunts, for having too curiously pry'd into,  
" and observ'd the Mysteries of *Bacchus*.  
" This is all the *Fable* informs us of *Penthea*,  
" as we may see in the 3d B. V. 10. of  
" the *Metam*: yet to express this Tragical  
" Death of *Penthea*, *Horace* employs a Figure,  
" and says that the Palace of *Penthea* was de-  
" destroy'd,

—— *Tectaque Penthei*  
*Disjecta non Levi (or, non Leni) ruina.*

" *F. Tarteron* explains this Passage literally  
" thus, I will add, says he, in a new Transport  
" the

Mr. Rosel Baumon's Letter.

“ the Palace of Penthea ruin'd and overthrown. So  
“ that a Reader, that were not acquainted with the  
“ Fable, might be apt to think, upon the Authori-  
“ ty of this Version, that *Penthea's* House had been  
“ overturned; whereas this Passage of *Horace* is on-  
“ ly to be understood of her Tragical Death. The  
“ Poetical Figure the Poet here uses, is also found in  
“ several other Places of his Writings. Immedi-  
“ ately after the Passage now cited, he expresses *Li-*  
“ *curgus's* Death by *Exitium Licurgi*; and else-  
“ where he says, *Cecidit Flamma Chimera*, for *ce-*  
“ *cidit Chimera*.

“ 'Tis exactly the same in the Passage before us,  
“ to express how Kings and Princes are equally sub-  
“ ject to Death with the meanest of their Subjects,  
“ *Horace*, says, that *Death overturns the Palaces*  
“ *of the first, equally as the Cottages of the last*.  
“ Now there is nothing in this, but a very usual and  
“ common Figure, in my Opinion nothing very  
“ Noble or Sublime; and to speak all I think, not  
“ indeed any thing Fine. The Turn which *Mal-*  
“ *berbe* gives it, in my Judgment, is much happier  
“ and far superior. But then we must also own,  
“ that in so melancholy a Declaration as this of *Ho-*  
“ *race* is to all Mankind, the Sublime was no way  
“ proper; on the contrary, if it had occur'd here,  
“ 'twould have been vicious and unnatural, and ap-  
“ pear'd in a wrong place. What we have now  
“ observ'd, shews how necessary it is, when ever  
“ we undertake to explain any of the Ancients,  
“ never to lose out of Sight the Ideas and Notions  
“ that generally obtain'd and prevail'd when they  
“ wrote. Without this Caution, if the least Pre-  
“ possession occurs, and mixes with our Interpreta-  
“ tions, we shall presently fancy we find imaginary  
“ Beauties and Excellencies in them, without all  
“ just and solid Foundation, &c. I am, SIR,

“ Your most Humble and Obedient Servant,  
“ De Rosel Baumon.

JU 66



